

# Forced Migration, Processes of Return and Livelihood Construction among Pastoralists in Northern Sudan

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*The Hawaweer, a nomadic, pastoralist group in northern Sudan, were seriously affected by the drought in the Sahel during the mid-1980s. Their experience illustrates the connection between internally displaced people, normal mobility, forced migration, dilemmas and opportunities of return and how new livelihoods can be successfully constructed based on traditional rights, strong local institutions and external resources. Some displaced Hawaweer got the chance to return to their homeland as new livelihood opportunities were established; others did not get this opportunity nor would they have returned if they had been given the chance. In both situations, the processes of displacement and return had an impact on the sense of belonging and identity.*

**Keywords:** Sudan, the Hawaweer, pastoralists, drought, internally displaced persons, forced migration, return and traditional institutions.

## Forced migration and homecoming

Many people around the world are forced to migrate, to settle in places where they are not welcome, to construct new livelihoods and to change their ways of living. This study focuses on internally displaced nomadic pastoralists, the Hawaweer of Wadi Al Muggadam in the northern part of Sudan, who were forced to migrate in the mid-1980s due to the serious Sahel drought and famine. The famine experienced by the Hawaweer was triggered by the failure of rainfall which resulted in both rich and poor people losing all their livestock, being forced to migrate and becoming what they perceived as ‘servants’ in communities where they were not welcome by the local people (mainly the Nile region in northern Sudan). Although the triggering factor of the famine was rainfall failure and the Hawaweer became categorised as environmental refugees, it should be noted that famines are usually politically related, no matter how diverse the triggering factors might be (Devereux, 2000). The purpose of this study is to investigate forced migration, processes of return and how successful livelihood construction in the homelands of the returned forced migrants can be facilitated. Many studies have examined forced migrants returning to their homelands or being resettled in new locations. The terms used to describe such processes of return are recovery, reconstruction, repatriation and rehabilitation. But, as Hammond (1999) stresses, these concepts might as well be perceived as construction, creativity, innovation and

improvisation. The return process is not about going home or back in time to regain something that once existed, it creates an entirely new situation. The processes of change experienced by the Hawaweer illustrate this when they returned to their homeland and constructed new livelihoods based on traditional rights and new opportunities. In marginal lands and economically poor areas such as the drylands of northern Sudan, return and homecoming are indeed intertwined with livelihood security opportunities — and with survival.

The study addresses the following research questions:

- How do internally displaced people cope with situations of forced migration, and how do nomadic people perceive normal mobility and forced movement?
- To what degree, and why, do some displaced people choose to return to their homelands while others choose to stay where they settle down; and how do these different choices affect belonging and identity?
- How can successful processes be facilitated for the return of forced migrants to their homelands whereby new opportunities are created and sustainable livelihoods encouraged?

It is important to underline that the successful return of people once forced to migrate should not be seen as an argument advocating that return is always the best solution. This research is not based on such an underlying assumption that return is always the best option for forced migrants. For forced migrants the possibility or right to stay in the area where they settle down might be as important as the right to return to one's homeland. Internationally, the right to return appears to be more recognised than the right to stay. The important challenge is how to make both these rights operational. The focus of this study, however, is how to operationalise internally displaced people's right to return by creating new opportunities to construct sustainable livelihoods where traditional survival strategies have failed.

## **The nomadic pastoralist group Hawaweer**

The nomadic pastoralist ethnic group, Hawaweer, who live in the drylands of northern Sudan, were selected for this particular study on forced migration, processes of return and livelihood reconstruction for the following reasons. The Hawaweer were seriously affected by the drought and human disaster in the Sahelian countries during the mid-1980s; the majority of the Hawaweer based in Wadi Al Muggadam were forced to migrate in order to survive; and, in addition, rather successful return processes have taken place during the 1990s. One purpose of this research is to investigate the lessons learned from these relatively successful processes of return and reconstruction of livelihood. Another purpose is to document what happened to a group of people badly hit by the drought and human disaster in Sahel in the mid-1980s. Another criterion for the selection was that 10 years of institutional collaboration between ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), NORAD (Norwegian Development Cooperation Agency) and Noragric/NLH (Agricultural University of Norway) provided the first-hand knowledge, personal contacts and networks essential for undertaking the study. This institutional collaboration also provided access to secondary unpublished sources of information such as project reports, technical reports, reviews and evaluations.

## Research approach

In examining primary sources of information, qualitative research methods were applied, multi-faceted in time, sources and geographic sites, and which included different tools and approaches such as individual and group interviews, key informant interviews, participatory observations and natural resource mapping. Fieldwork was undertaken twice in the period 1998–2000 in the Khartoum/Omdurman area, Nile region, Wadi Al Muggadam and Um Jawasir. The key informants interviewed were local men and women leaders, civil servants, NGO/ADRA project staff, university faculty and refugee camp employees. The participatory observations comprised visits to refugee camps around Khartoum/Omdurman, visits to displaced Hawaweer along the Nile river in the north (Korti, Merowe, Karima, Al Gorer), visits to the Hawaweer at different geographical sites within their traditional homeland in Wadi Al Muggadam (such as Wadi El Braiga and Rigriga), walking around the farms in the irrigated area in Um Jawasir, visits to rain-fed agriculture sites in Wadi Gumur and visits to old and new Tamtam (bus station and service centre).

Interviews with Hawaweer men and women include focus group interviews, interviews with elderly people, individual interviews of Hawaweer with irrigated land in the ADRA/NORAD-funded project, as well as people without land, interviews and field visits with local leaders, meetings and interviews with local institutions (popular committee, farmers committee, women's committee, local government, teachers) and an interview with a representative of the private sector (*Sherian*). Natural resource mapping with local leaders was undertaken to obtain an overview of grassland, rain-fed agriculture and wildlife resources. The interviews were open-ended without any use of questionnaires or interview guides. The informants were selected by applying the snowball principle and based on time availability and their willingness to share experiences with us. Contacts were established while walking around, riding donkeys or participating in ceremonies (baptisms, weddings), social events (parties, plays, dinner parties), the women's group and women's market and by visiting schools, local shops and cafés. The aim was to create informal and casual settings for interaction and discussion and to avoid formal interview settings. However, if approached by someone who did wish to make a more formal appointment, we accepted. In this process, we made sure that those interviewed represented different groups of people such as returnees, people who remained during the drought and displaced Hawaweer. These included men and women, old and young; agro-pastoralists living within and outside the project; the poor and the better off; people 'living' inside the Um Jawasir project area and people living 'outside' this area.

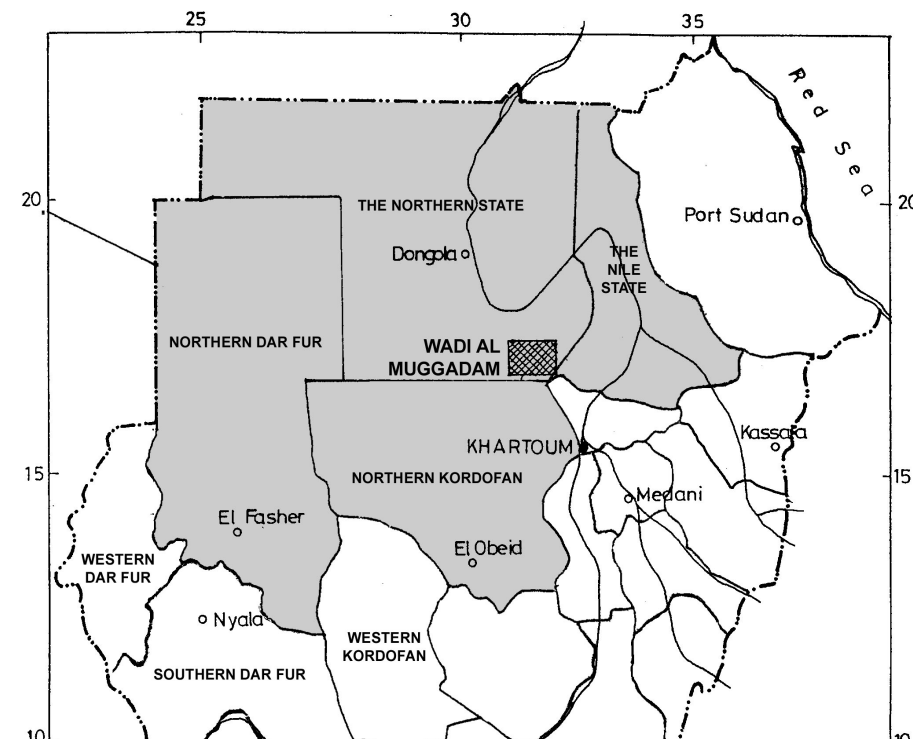
In addition to the qualitative interviews and observations, a questionnaire was planned and funded by the research team and conducted (including data analysis) by a local researcher, Khalid S. Moh. The questionnaire asked people to give their reasons to return or not to return to Um Jawasir. A sample of 45 respondents was randomly selected using the population census of 1994 as a frame (1,106 households). When results from this survey are supplied in the article, reference is given to Moh (1999).

## The Hawaweer, drought and hunger

The Hawaweer inhabit four states in northern Sudan but the majority live in Northern State. They account for about 20 per cent of the population there, numbering about

300,000 (Moh, 1999) and are the third-largest ethnic group after the Hasania and the Kababish. The most influential ethnic group in the state is the Shaigia, who live around the Nile River near the Egyptian border. The Hawaweer are nomadic pastoralists and their traditional homeland in Northern State is Wadi Al Muggadam in the middle of the Bayoda desert, a dry tributary of the Nile, which starts in Kordofan in western Sudan and joins the Nile in Korti in northern Sudan (10–20km wide and 130km long). Um Jawasir is situated in the middle of Wadi Al Muggadam and is a traditional focal point for the Hawaweer. During the toughest period of the drought in the mid-1980s not many families remained in Um Jawasir, only women, children and old men. Some people reported that about 30 families stayed in Um Jawasir during the drought. In the whole Wadi Al Muggadam area, it is estimated that about 6,000 Hawaweer families remained in the valley while 20,000 families were displaced in the Nile area (Johnsen et al., 1996). The men went to seek work wherever they could. Many went north to the Nile region (Dongola, Korti, Merowe, Karima, Al Gorer), some went to camps in Omdurman, and some went to the Gulf (Saudi Arabia). When whole families migrated, the women also accepted wage work. Both men and women worked on farms; men also worked in construction and service, and women as domestic workers.

It is estimated that 250,000 people starved to death as a result of the drought and famine in the Darfur and Kordofan states in northern Sudan during the period 1984–5 (Devereux, 2000). De Waal describes the disaster in Darfur and Kordofan as follows: 'Nimeiri's anti-famine strategy was simple: he denied that the problem existed



**Figure 1** Map of Um Jawasir, Wadi Al Muggadam, Bayoda desert, Sudan. The four states inhabited by Hawaweer are shaded in grey

... an entirely preventable tragedy cost an estimated 250,000 lives' (1997: 91). Accordingly, the Hawaweer became so-called environmental refugees during the mid-1980s. The famine experienced by the Hawaweer was triggered by rainfall failure and resulted in both rich and poor people losing their livelihoods and being forced to adjust their coping mechanisms. The recent Hawaweer experience is a story about going from drought, hunger, disaster and forced migration to relief, return, reconstruction and long-term development. In a way, it is remarkable how this successful post-famine and post-drought development has been possible in such a war-torn country as Sudan, which has largely been excluded from outside assistance except for relief support in the south and activities in support of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) moving from south to north. However, as in other war-torn societies, life goes on and development takes place all the same.

### **From relief to post-drought development: the establishment of the Um Jawasir project**

Today, large numbers of the Hawaweer continue to live as environmental refugees in the outskirts of major settlements along the Nile strip in the north of Sudan between Merowe and Dongola. They are not welcomed by the local communities and still consider themselves as belonging to the Wadi Al Muggadam, the homeland of the Hawaweer. The category 'environmental refugee' describes groups of people displaced as a result of environmental changes (Myers, 1993; Trollidalen et al., 1992; Lassailly et al., 1992). The term was first used by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1984–5 (Jacobsen, 1988; Ramlogan, 1996; Black, 1998). The term is broad enough to include migration attributed to climate change and rainfall failure. Environmental refugees are defined as people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardises their existence or seriously affects their quality of life (El-Hinnawi, 1985: 4). Many migration and refugee specialists and agencies now explicitly reject the term environmental refugees (McGregor, 1994). This is not because the problem of environmental degradation does not exist, but because the term is used in much the same way as economic migrant as a form of distress migration (Suhrke, 1994). At the same time, stress on the environment as an underlying cause tends to take the attention away from other factors of great importance, usually socio-political ones (Ramlogan, 1996; O'Lear, 1997). Environmental refugee as a term is, today, basically perceived as a way of simplifying the understanding of a situation that is usually much more complex than what can be illustrated by environmental explanations (McGregor, 1994). For example, Kibreab (1997) argues that the term environmental refugee was invented at least in part to depoliticise the causes of displacement. The categorisation of the Hawaweer as environmental refugees was appropriate in the sense that they were put on the agenda of international NGOs providing relief to people in northern Sudan in 1984–5.

Relief activities directed towards the Hawaweer were phased out in 1986 and followed by rehabilitation planning. Personnel at the University of Khartoum were contracted by UNEP in 1985 to undertake a feasibility study and found that Wadi Al Muggadam possesses a rich fresh-water aquifer at a reasonable depth and soil of sufficient quality for irrigated agriculture (ADRA, LUDCA and IES, 1999). After a

long period of planning, trying and failing, the Um Jawasir project funded by ADRA/NORAD emerged in 1994. The project is based on irrigated agriculture and provides user rights to selected Hawaweer pastoralists to cultivate small irrigated plots with wheat, beans, dates, alfalfa, onions, okra and watermelons. First, 40 farms, each of two *feddans* (0.84ha) were established and the first commercial crop was produced in the winter season of 1992 (before NORAD agreed to fund the whole project). In 1995, six new wells with diesel pumps and 72 new farms each of four *feddans* were established. Another extension started in 2000 with six more wells and 96 new farms. Responsibility for the wells and farms established in the two first phases of the project has been handed over to the Hawaweer. In addition to agricultural production, the irrigated crops have facilitated a substantial increase in animal production, both milk and meat, owing to increased availability of fodder.

A recent evaluation gave the project a favourable assessment and found that the irrigated agricultural activities in the project were financially sustainable and that both collective (revolving fund) and individual (livestock) savings were undertaken at a satisfactory level (Johnsen et al., 2000). However, the evaluation did find several problems, such as high family expenditure of direct beneficiaries, sand movement which has decreased the number of farms established during the first phase (shelterbelts of mesquite, *Prosopis chilensis*, have now been planted to resolve this problem), and that more time was needed than anticipated. About 110 families (almost 1,000 people) are farming in the project area, not counting the 96 new farms to be established in 2001. In addition, many Hawaweer without an irrigated plot are also attached to the project area in different ways (altogether about 10,000 people). Yet, this is just a small number of people in comparison with the number of Hawaweer who are in need of rehabilitation or integration with secure employment (20,000 Hawaweer families are displaced in the Nile area and a smaller proportion in Omdurman).

The Um Jawasir project integrates crop and livestock production. Fodder is produced in the plots and used for feeding members' own animals as well as those sold to other pastoralists. The farm surplus is often used to invest in new animals. Instead of seasonal movement to Northern Kordofan, the Hawaweer prefer to remain closer to the project where water and fodder are available. The number of animals in the extended Um Jawasir area is still small because poorer Hawaweer with few animals were selected to receive irrigated land (ADRA, LUDCA and IES, 1999). In the past, the Hawaweer depended mainly on camels, sheep and goats, though to a limited extent they practised crop production in years of good rainfall. On average, rain-fed cultivation is only possible every 10th year when the flooding, in addition to the rainfall, is favourable for crop production. The growing season of 1999–2000 was marked by successful rain-fed sorghum production, which was positive for the livelihoods of both Hawaweer in the Wadi Al Muggadam as well as on displaced Hawaweer in the Nile region who had returned to the Wadi to cultivate ancestral land. There are different grazing wadis, places where rain-fed agriculture is undertaken and the Um Jawasir project area with irrigated agriculture.

## Forced migration and livelihood coping strategies

Internally displaced people are defined as individuals or groups who have been forced to flee or to leave their homes of habitual residence, particularly as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalised violence,

violation of human rights or natural or man-made disasters; and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border (UNICEF, 1997: 2). The Hawaweer clearly fall within these definitions of forced migrants and internally displaced people. Climate change and rainfall failure caused drought, hunger, livelihood breakdown, distress and forced migration. For many people, the choice was either to stay and starve to death or to go somewhere else in search of work opportunities. At the same time mobility and different kinds of migration have always been part of the Hawaweer's livelihood strategy. In addition, not all the Hawaweer perceived the situation as forced. Some people chose to stay behind. Among these, some were in a situation where migration was impossible because they did not have access to the necessary number of animals needed for migrating. For them, the reason for staying was not because they chose to, but because they were forced to (de Waal, 1988; Larsen, 2001). This shows that what was forced and not forced can vary within the same group of people. People can be both forced to stay or forced to migrate and at the same time there is a certain degree of choice related to both staying and migrating (Van Hear, 1998). Some people within the same group and situation can be more adversely affected by shocks and disasters than others and less able to cope. The poor are usually those hit hardest. Skeldon (1997) states that the very poor are generally excluded from migration opportunities. Accordingly, Van Hear (1998) stresses that it is the better-off who can afford the cost of migration.

It was not new for the Hawaweer to migrate in search of work opportunities. They had always been mobile as part of their nomadic lifestyle and livelihood diversification. For decades, many Hawaweer had been seasonal labourers in the Nile area. Others had gone to Omdurman or the Gulf. Others again had been involved in trading of animals and gone to the borders of Chad and Egypt to trade camels. The Hawaweer were used to experiencing drought, but now many did not leave of their own free will but because of a desperate search for survival and an urgent need to feed their hunger-struck families. The practice of migration was old and well known, but the context was new and created different situations than previously experienced. The old coping strategy of seasonal labour migration was not sufficient to keep hunger away, nor was the nomadic lifestyle of trading animals and moving according to pasture opportunities. The Hawaweer's food supply had always been dependent upon their ability to exchange labour for wages and to sell animals in times of difficulty. However, during the drought the labour market was flooded by able workers willing to do anything. In the Nile area (3–4 days journey by camel; now there is a daily bus connection from Tamtam), the Hawaweer who had been used to finding manual work at reasonable wages were now faced with extreme difficulties in finding any. Elmekki (1999) reports similarly from the whole of northern Sudan, not only about the Hawaweer, but about the oversupply of labour generally, pointing out that migration began earlier than usual, that the rate had risen rapidly and that there was an increase in whole-family migration that indicates the large amount of stress involved. It should be noted, however, that it is difficult to measure the various types of migration (de Waal, 1988).

Seasonal migration had been regarded as a normal part of the Hawaweer's livelihood. This changed as more people migrated more permanently than previously. The labour resource that the Hawaweer represented in peak work seasons used to be appreciated by the Nile people. However, as the number of Hawaweer coming increased, the local communities gradually began to perceive them as a threat. As work opportunities diminished, the Hawaweer were increasingly faced with difficulties and humiliations. They had been an important and cheap labour supply in developing the

commercial agricultural production in the Nile area (for example, date plantations) and the local Nile people had benefited from their presence. Cheap labour has also been important in agricultural development elsewhere in Sudan. Kok (1989) and Kuhlman (1990) document how cheap Ethiopian labour fuelled the expansion of commercial agriculture in eastern Sudan. Similarly, in southern Sudan, Ugandan refugees contributed to rural growth and market development.

For the Hawaweer, social networks were of crucial importance to survival with regard to both employment opportunities and facilitating the possibility of return after the entire household had migrated. Families with migrant workers in the Gulf, established in the Nile area or in Omdurman, were less seriously affected than others. The number of animals owned was also an important factor at the start of the drought, but in time animals played a less important role as a coping strategy because their value fell dramatically. Elmekki (1999) reports that under normal circumstances the price of a goat would buy a sack of millet, while in 1991 the same sack required the sale of 20 animals. He concludes that possibilities of selling animals to buy grain were exhausted during the first year of famine and that Khartoum-based export companies increased their profit by a minimum of 1,000 per cent during the years of the drought. As one local Hawaweer leader expressed it, rich animal keepers lost all their stock and became servants in the north (Nile area). The Hawaweer sub-group of Harrarine were very badly hit because they owned mainly camels and preferred to survive in the open desert. Hawaweer sub-groups owning sheep and goats in addition to camels and who stayed where there was a bit more vegetation (not in the open desert area) fared less badly. Underlining the importance of social networks, entire households that migrated left animals with relatives or neighbours within the Hawaweer sub-groups as insurance for their return if the rainfall situation improved. These animals were cared for, multiplied and made it easier for people to return when the rains came back. The Hawaweer need livestock to be able to migrate from their homeland as well as to return to it.

## Facilitating successful return

A returnee considers the process to be more of a new beginning than a return to the past (Hammond, 1999). Many Hawaweer got the opportunity to return to their homeland in Wadi Al Muggadam, while others did not get it or did not take it. The choice of staying where forced migrants settle is as important as the right to return. Even within a group, what is best for some members might not be for others. Some people integrate more easily than others and are better able to create new livelihoods. The challenge is how to facilitate both the possibility of staying as well as the option of returning, and the main question in both situations is how to make a living (livelihood security). In poor areas, homecoming is indeed intertwined with livelihood security as a whole as well as access to health and education. Hammond (1999) states that repatriation has often meant a significant drop in the availability of health-care and educational services. She poses the question of why returnees should choose to forgo a higher standard of living for the pleasure of going back to their country of origin. There are three possible outcomes of forced migration: integration, resettlement or return to the homeland. All three are difficult. Usually, what is needed to make people want to return is formal provision of collective or public goods and services (Moser, 1998). However, the Hawaweer who decided to return were not so concerned about access to services within health and education. They were willing to take the risk that such

facilities would be provided in due course. Other Hawaweer decided not to return because of children's schooling or health problems.

The most important factor for the Hawaweer who did choose to return was new livelihood opportunities created at home based on traditional rights to land. Without these rights, as well as effective traditional institutions, the new opportunities would probably not have materialised. The Hawaweer have rights to their traditional homeland that are recognised by the government. The right to cultivate land follows the sub-ethnic groups and is regulated by customary law. Each Hawaweer sub-group is entitled to a fair share of the flooded and most fertile arable land. Rocks indicating property demarcations were used as boundaries (in the old days, a 'rock-throwing' principle was applied, distributing sub-group user rights to cultivate the land). As for grazing livestock, the pasture is available to all Hawaweer regardless of sub-ethnic membership. However, members of one Hawaweer sub-ethnic group cannot settle on the land of another group and enjoy the same rights. Drinking-water is freely accessible for both people and animals, but Hawaweer without appropriate rights are not allowed to dig a permanent well (*moshra*) in the area of another Hawaweer sub-group, although a temporary well (*sefar*) may be dug.

There have been many efforts towards voluntary repatriation of displaced people. Some repatriation projects have, to a limited degree, been successful due to a whole range of different reasons. Getachew (1996) reports that UNCHR's repatriation and rehabilitation programme made several mistakes in relation to displacement and return of pastoralists in southern Ethiopia. UNCHR staff lacked knowledge and understanding of the local situation and no serious consultations with the returnees were carried out. Problems included inadequate resources, corruption, inadequate monitoring and decisions taken without preliminary or ongoing research. Successful return has proven difficult for many reasons. Repatriation is not only physical, but also social, economic and political. The reasons given by the Hawaweer for returning to Um Jawasir are closely tied to livelihood opportunities, such as to reclaim a farm (irrigated land), to cultivate a grandfather's land (both irrigated and rain-fed agriculture), to get a job (agricultural labour such as watering, digging of canals, harvesting), to get a technical job (operating pumps, tractors, grinding-mills), for marketing or trading purposes (consumer goods, sale of animals, crops and vegetables) (Moh, 1999).

Women have also returned to Um Jawasir on their own as well as accompanying their husbands. Women have not yet received individual plots from the project, but several women are able to secure a livelihood or contribute to the family income by working on the land as labourers — by weeding, harvesting of wheat and beans, picking okra, harvesting sorghum, cutting alfalfa, threshing sorghum or by engaging in petty trading. In addition, the Um Jawasir project includes a women's component with micro-credit possibilities where women sew clothes, make soap and pasta for sale and home consumption, cultivate the land of the women's group, produce fodder, organise local markets and run a local school (Larsen, 2001).

When explaining why people returned to Um Jawasir (see livelihood opportunities above), most people will say that that they failed to find a sustainable source of income in the Nile area and their lives there were very poor. Accordingly, the reasons given for people not to return to Um Jawasir are also closely related to livelihood opportunity, including access to services. People have not returned because they did not receive an irrigated plot in the project; because they have a job in the Nile area; because their children are in good schools; because they prefer a more urban life;

because community services are lacking in Um Jawasir; and because they are uncertain about the sustainability of the Um Jawasir project (Moh, 1999).

## **The feeling of belonging**

The Hawaweer who returned to Um Jawasir were in many ways different from the ones who had left. New social positions, social differentiation, gender roles and patterns of behaviour had developed. The Hawaweer returned because they could claim rights in the area and because the Um Jawasir project provided the most secure livelihood option. Also, the categorisation of people as refugees and returnees is misleading because of constant movement. Migration had always been an integral part of survival. The categories refugee and returnee should be regarded as a continuum and not as clearly defined groups of people. The issue of geographic belonging is important in processes of migration and return. Stølen (2000) gave evidence of returnees in Guatemala who perceived that the place of belonging was where they found sustainable livelihoods. For the Hawaweer, the feeling of belonging is not necessarily connected to secure livelihoods. They feel they belong to one place and at the same time they might have their livelihood at another. Many Hawaweer feel they belong to Um Jawasir in Wadi Al Muggadam, but the Nile area is where they make their livings. The feeling of belonging should not necessarily be equated with secure livelihoods. People might choose to live where they have a secure livelihood, but this does not imply that they also feel that they belong to this place. In the Nile area, many Hawaweer would state a feeling of belonging to Um Jawasir, but because of livelihood opportunities and service facilities, they chose to stay in the Nile area.

## **What made it possible for Hawaweer to return?**

It is difficult to estimate how many families returned to the Um Jawasir area after the drought; one reason being that the definitions of a person who stayed behind and a returnee overlap as opposite extremes in a continuum. Some people claim that in Um Jawasir only about 30 families actually stayed throughout the droughts, while others claim the number was much higher. The terms 'staying' and 'returning' are obviously difficult to apply to a nomadic group. Presently, the population of Hawaweer in and around Um Jawasir is about 10,000 people. There are more people in the Um Jawasir area today than before the serious drought of the 1980s; however, the number of animals is still fewer than it was before the drought. The establishment of the project resulted in many more Hawaweer returning than those being allocated irrigated plots. Agricultural activities create casual labour opportunities and provide fodder for the animals not only for people with irrigated plots, but also for extended groups of Hawaweer. Also, the rainfall situation during the last five years has been more favourable than during the worst years of the 1980s, which again, has enabled some Hawaweer to return. In 1998 there was good rain with flooding and rain-fed agricultural production; 1993 had some rain and 1999 was another good year. Below, some important factors contributing to the successful return are highlighted.

### ***Irrigated agriculture: based on local innovation and initiative***

During the drought of the 1980s, a Hawaweer local leader dug a well with manual workers and bought a water pump. The purpose of the well was to provide irrigated water supply to the area where sorghum was usually cultivated during years of good rainfall and flooding (on average every 10th year) so that sorghum could be grown in periods of rainfall failure and severe hunger. The well was dug where the soil was most fertile and where the Hawaweer had traditional cultivation rights to the land. Unfortunately, the chief was not able to dig deeply enough to secure sustainable access to water. Later, more or less the same idea was applied by ADRA which established the irrigated agricultural development project, Um Jawasir in the middle of the Wadi Al Muggadam, knowing that irrigated agriculture was something in which the Hawaweer leadership had already invested time, effort and money. This local initiative demonstrated that the nomadic pastoralists were motivated to become involved in irrigated agriculture. ADRA also knew that the Hawaweer pastoralists were accustomed to practise rain-fed sorghum cultivation when given the opportunity; they sometimes cultivated crops irrigated from traditional wells; and many Hawaweer applied different agriculture practices as opposed to casual farm work in the Nile region to the north and other places in Sudan or the Gulf.

### ***Recognition of traditional rights***

ADRA did not choose the most fertile land that used to be cultivated during good rainfall and flooding as the Hawaweer local leader had done. In the area of the first hand-dug well used for irrigation, the land was distributed to the different Hawaweer sub-ethnic groups and families in a traditional rights system marked by rocks according to the rock-throwing principle. ADRA did not want to interfere in this system of traditional cultivation rights. Also the government did not want to provide land to a project which already had the traditional cultivation user-rights attached to it. In the traditional land rights system, each Hawaweer sub-group was entitled to a fair share of the flooded and most fertile land. When the project area was established, the land was selected using geological assessment and not by identifying the most fertile soil, which had individual cultivation user rights attached to it. The staff wanted to avoid individuals claiming traditional cultivation rights after it had been irrigated and distributed to needy Hawaweer. The project land was not only the homeland of the Hawaweer, but was also used as a common-property grazing land without individual user-rights to cultivate. The emphasis of understanding different types of traditional rights in relation to both grazing and cultivation made it possible to avoid conflicts in relation to land tenure and rights.

When the irrigated plots in the project were distributed, it was the local Hawaweer leaders, not the project staff, ADRA or the government, who decided the allocation. Each of the nine Hawaweer sub-ethnic groups was given a certain percentage of land to distribute among their members in accordance with the size of the group. Local leaders distributed the plots to needy male Hawaweer in accordance with the following criteria, developed jointly by the leaders: generosity (the farmer should be known as a generous person); have many dependants; and physical fitness for farming (strong and healthy).

### ***Excellent leadership, efficient institutions and participatory approaches***

Strong leadership was provided both by the Hawaweer and by the Um Jawasir project. The commitment of the ADRA/government project staff and the excellent leadership of the project, both contributed significantly to its success. However, what might have played an equally important role are the strong traditional Hawaweer institutions, leadership and social networks. The Hawaweer are divided into nine sub-ethnic groups (the Rubab, Harareen, Habasab, Salhab, Goudtab, Tamaseeh, Fazarab, Khamaseen, Mowalka) and each group is divided into lineages, important for social relations, rights, survival, politics and governance. The Harareen have the *Nazeer* who is like a 'king' for the Hawaweer as a whole. In addition, the Hawaweer local leaders constitute four *Umdas*, seven *Sheiks* and the *Agawids* — which consist of elder wise men. Added to the traditional Hawaweer leaders, the government has established a system of Popular Committees (PCs) which function as local governments with a wide mandate and authority, for example, the Popular Committees can fine and arrest people as well as set taxes. In addition, the mobile court is an important institution in local governance and conflict resolution. The different sub-ethnic groups provide members to the mobile court. As well as traditional and governmental institutions, the Um Jawasir project has established different committees to run the project in a participatory way. The most important committee is the farmers' committee, with the same members as the Popular Committee. Effective, traditional, local governmental and project institutions and organisations are the backbone of the successful implementation of the Um Jawasir project. This institutional set-up provided sufficient conflict resolution capacity to tackle problems when they emerged.

ADRA, with NORAD funding, was willing to take the risk of digging wells for some nomadic people in the desert of northern Sudan, an area where no other donors were active. Without funds, the creation of new opportunities and the reconstruction of livelihoods would have been very difficult. The Hawaweer experience indicates that successful institutions at local level and a committed NGO may compensate for the problems of policy failure and lack of resources at national level given that funding is made available from the outside.

### ***Construction of secure livelihoods***

The concept of sustainable livelihoods is defined as the means, activities, entitlements and assets by which people make a living including natural, social, human, physical and financial capital (Scoones, 1998; UNDP, 1999; Ellis, 1999; Carney, 1999; Haug, 1999). Carney (1998: 4) defines a sustainable livelihood as follows: a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. Those working on the Um Jawasir project have recognised that constructing livelihoods includes not only the creation of income opportunities through mobilisation of natural capital such as land, water and common-property resources. Also, social and human capital were recognised, mobilised and played a crucial role in livelihood construction, for example, social networks, traditional institutions, participation, local knowledge and human skills. In addition, physical capital such as schools, roads, clinics and markets were gradually included as well as financial capital (a revolving fund, camels, sheep and goats). To construct

secure livelihoods, the project applied a strategy bringing together all these different elements and linking micro-level understanding of poverty, culture and resources to project implementation.

## Post-drought development and multiple identities

‘A poor person is somebody who does not have anything to give to guests.’  
(Hawaweer/Salhab elder in Wadi El Braiga, 2000).

As stated above, the Hawaweer who returned to Um Jawasir did not seek to move backward in time to recapture a life they once had, but rather the opposite: to construct something new and better than what went before (Hammond, 1999). The aim of the Um Jawasir project is to rebuild local capacities for food production in a post-hunger effort to create sustainable livelihoods for as many Hawaweer as possible. In order to achieve this aim, the project has transformed nomadic pastoralists who practised successful rain-fed agriculture on average every 10th year, and who occasionally took on casual farm work in the Nile area, to semi-nomadic agro-pastoralists. The Hawaweer who irrigate plots in the Um Jawasir project tend to identify themselves as farmers although they are also pastoralists and several of them nomadic pastoralists. However, the patterns of movement have changed. In the past, the Hawaweer moved in large groups trading animals in exchange of sorghum, sugar and tea. Today, it has become common only to move as a family unit within a smaller geographical area. When Hawaweer are asked whether it is possible to be both a farmer and a nomad in their hearts, many will answer that it is better to be a farmer because they could not survive as a nomad, since this is just too risky. And they will tell about the rich Hawaweer nomads who lost all their animals and became servants in the Nile area. They will say that the sub-ethnic group of Rubab are the best farmers, but add that all Hawaweer are both farmers and nomads. The feeling of identity (pastoralist, farmer or both) is connected to livelihood opportunities. Having not survived as nomadic pastoralists, livelihood diversification has led to multiple belonging and identity. For the Hawaweer, it is not difficult to fit into more than one category. It is not a problem to be both a semi-nomadic pastoralist undertaking agriculture once in a while and a semi-settled agro-pastoralist moving every now and then. Multiple identities imply that the Hawaweer are able to combine being both a farmer and a nomad, which are the two ‘extremes’ at each end of the continuum. Most Hawaweer will fit somewhere in between these two categories and exactly where on the continuum will vary with time and opportunities.

## Conclusion

The Hawaweer case illustrates how post-drought development, despite unfavourable conditions at national as well as international level, has been possible among internally displaced pastoralists in the marginal drylands of northern Sudan. However, it is important to underline that what might work in one place might not necessarily work elsewhere. The main lessons learned are that the different actors involved in the Um Jawasir project were willing to take risks (for example, by introducing diesel pumps and irrigated agriculture to pastoral nomads in the middle of the Bayoda desert) and

that appropriate technical solutions went hand in hand with local initiatives and priorities. This was done while recognising the importance of traditional rights and institutions and placing the main responsibility with the local Hawaweer leaders. The Um Jawasir project had to be a success because, as we were told by one of the local leaders, hunger and humiliation was the only other option.

## Acknowledgements

This study relies on data collected jointly by Dr Kjersti Larsen and the author. Dr Larsen has also provided valuable comments to the process of developing the article. In addition, I would like to acknowledge Mr Fadul Beshir Elhaj, Ms Manal Hassan and Mr Khalid Salih Moh for their collaboration, kind assistance and willingness to share their experience and insight with us.

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