PLIGHT OF DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN AFRICA: 
CASE STUDY OF DARFUR CRISIS

By

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Introduction

In Africa, the overwhelming majority of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are women and children who constitute about 80% of the displaced populations and are widely recognised as the most vulnerable. Stripped of the protection of their homes, family structures, and often their government, women and children are made particularly vulnerable. They face the rigors of long journeys seeking safety, official harassment and frequent sexual abuse even after reaching an apparent place of safety. In camp and non-camp situations, they are victims of rape, sexual assault, forced recruitment and other forms of sexual violence and forced labour.

IDPs are people forced to flee their homes but whom, unlike refugees, remain within their country’s borders. Refugees and IDPs share many characteristics; however, those who are displaced within their own borders are not covered by international refugee law and are therefore particularly difficult to protect or to provide them with humanitarian assistance. Moreover, obtaining accurate

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figures for IDPs may be difficult because populations are constantly fluctuating:

some IDPs maybe returning home while others are fleeing, others may periodically return to IDPs camps where available, to take advantage of humanitarian aid. Nonetheless, at the end of 2006, estimates of world IDPs population rose to 24.5 million and the region with the largest IDPs population being Africa, with some 11.8 million in 21 countries.³

Research indicates that displacement renders the internally displaced particularly vulnerable whether in transit from one place to another or in hiding.⁴ Their vulnerability is further accentuated as the social organization of displaced communities are destroyed or damaged by the act of physical displacement which may take the form of family groups being separated or disorganized.⁵ Furthermore, children, the elderly and pregnant women experience profound psycho-social distress related to displacement and dislocation from sources of income and livelihood and a disruption of the education of children.

Women who flee from their homes in search of sanctuary from violent conflicts too often find that there is no meaningful refuge – they have simply escaped violence in conflict to face a different type of violence in the refugee camps. These women face particular protection and security risks in refugee camps, as well as the challenges of heading

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⁴ Baines E.K.: Vulnerable Bodies Gender, the UN and the Global Refugee Crisis (Burlington: Ash Gate Publishing 2004) 131.
⁵ Ibid.
households while suffering from their disadvantaged status as women.

This chapter therefore focuses on and outlines the situation of displaced women and children as vulnerable social category, with particular emphasis on Darfur crisis which has been one of the world’s largest concentrations of human displacement and suffering in recent times and whose sheer enormity is almost unimaginable. The chapter brings to the fore, the situation of displaced women and children, discussing their needs and analysing the impact of displacement on them. The chapter also outlines ways in which their needs can be effectively addressed by examining mechanisms for their protection and determining whether or not these provisions are being applied in the protection of this category of persons. The chapter concludes by advocating that State and non State actors should as a matter of necessity embark on positive steps to ensure the protection and assistance rendered to these forced migrants.

History of Sudan

Present day Sudan is located where the ancient Kingdom of Cush used to be and which flourished up to 350AD. Two kingdoms arose in its place, the Maqurra in Northern Sudan with headquarters at old Dongola and Alwa in Central Sudan with headquarters in Soba. By the 17th Century, these kingdoms were conquered by an alliance of Arabs and the tribes ruled by the “Black Sultans” of Funj dynasty.

Present day Southern Sudan lived in isolation from the north except for intermittent interruption by explorers and

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perennial slave raiding from the North. The peaceful period between the Muslim conquest and the imposition of colonial rule i.e. between the 17th - 19th Centuries witnessed demographic changes, which occurred gradually but steadily with the influx of Egyptians, Arabs from across the Red Sea and the Maghrab (Libya).

This area known as Sudan today served as a major route for Moslems pilgrims of West African origin headed for Mecca. A majority of these pilgrims neither reached Mecca nor did they return to their original home; but settled in Sudan thus gradually influencing the conversion of the local population along the pilgrimage routes that traversed present day Sudan. Indeed, it is speculated in some circles that the majority of non-Arab Moslems in the Western Sudan are of this origin.

Present day Sudan was ruled by Egypt between 1820-1885. The Mahdist uprising led by a northern shipwright, Mohammed Ahmed bin Abdallah was organised around Muslim values and by 1885 he captured Khartoum and beheaded General Charles Gordon who was in the service of the Egyptian government administering Sudan. By the turn of the century, Mahdist rule was overthrown by an Anglo-Egyptian force led by General Kitchener in the battle of Omdurman.

Thereafter, an Anglo-Egyptian condominium was put in place to administer Sudan. Present day Sudan was created by amalgamation of western (Darfur region), southern and northern Sudan after Darfur was subdued in 1916.14 The British government, through indirect rule established modern government and its institutions and linked the various strands of Sudanese economy with the international market.15 This system created centres of power with ethnic biases particularly as Northern Sudan had a well-organised network of government structures and institutions predating colonial rule.

Britain encouraged the replacement of Egyptian bureaucrats by northern Sudanese.16 The British colonial experience in India also made it to take conscious steps to prevent the emergence of pan Sudanese consciousness and in 1922 took practical steps toward creating “two Sudans”- North and South- that were administered independently of each other, ostensibly to protect the culturally underdeveloped Negroid South from the more advanced Northern Arab compatriots.17 Again, part of the Southern policy of the British in Sudan included the establishment of an equatorial (read as Negroid) corps in the army, the adoption of English as official language in the South and the recognition of Sunday as official public holiday.18

15. Ibid.
In 1946, the Southern policy was reversed and a central government replaced hitherto existing regional governments with Arabic as the official language. “Northerners” were now allowed into the politico-administrative positions in the South. It has been speculated that this political scheming sowed the seeds of conflicts in many flashpoints in modern Sudan waiting for suitable conditions to sprout and generate IDPs.19

**Origin and causes of the Conflict**
The violence in Darfur was centred on two issues: the land question and the rebellion that brought the State into an ongoing civil war. Darfur is inhabited by a variety of Moslem peoples that maybe distinguished in two distinct groups namely: the Fur, Massaleet and Zaggawa and Arab tribes collectively termed Baggara who settled in the region from about the 13th century. Relationship between both groups has always been tense.20 Before the abolition of slave trade at the beginning of the 20th century, Fur and Arab slavers competed for slaves by raiding nearby villages for slaves. The Fur and Massaleet were sedentary farmers while the Arabs and Zaggawa were nomadic herdsmen and this frequently brought them into conflict over access to land and water.21 Their different economic needs were made sharper by the divide and rule tactics of the British colonial Government

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that pitted the ‘superior’ Arab against the ‘primitive’ Negroid.\(^{22}\)

**Immediate cause of Darfur Crisis**

The Darfur conflict arose from a background of civil war in Sudan with the most recent conflict commencing in February 2003.\(^{23}\) The conflict began as an internal civil war between 1987-89 in which the government was initially not involved.\(^{24}\) The government waged a counter-insurgency and became involved in the war after the Islamist coup of 1989 while the national opposition parties joined the fray in 2002-2003. The war was fought by the tribal militias and tribally mobilized rebel movements.\(^{25}\)

Armed action by Western and Southern nationalists’ movements JEM and SLA\(^{26}\) against Sudanese internal security apparatus to force Khartoum into negotiation created a security vacuum resulting in an explosion of inter-
communal violence with revenge attacks and livestock raids by equally well-armed nomadic tribes.  

In an effort to contain the conflict, the international community practically forced Khartoum to reach an agreement with the liberation movements of Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) of Southern Sudan.  

This agreement had the potential of causing loss of control of vast areas and set a precedent with respect to the right of nationalities to self determination. The Sudanese State responded by manipulating ethnic cleavages to contain the agitation of these movements. This role played by the government exacerbated and militarized the conflict because it pitted the Arabs against the non-Arabs whether the non-Arabs were Moslems or not. This changed the character and face of the conflict into ethnic conflict and altered the hitherto non violent conflict between nomadic and sedentary tribes of western Sudan into violent conflict.  

By and large, the political conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan was mainly between the Janjaweed, a

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27. ‘Widespread insecurity in Darfur Despite Ceasefire’ News Article by Integrated Regional Information Networks, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2003.  
32. The Janjaweed is a coined Arabic word used by the local people to refer to gangs of outlaws and robbers. These groups are usually composed of criminal elements from different nomadic Arab tribes of the region. The Janjaweed who are uneducated were manipulated and politicised by the government and by racist organizations in the region such as the Arab congregation and Gouresh Group. They acquired International fame when the government started drafting the nomad tribes in Darfur to fight a proxy war on its behalf against the Sudan Liberation Army and Movement
militia recruited from local Arab tribes and the non-Arab peoples of the region based on the demand by non-Arab people for equal access to political and economic power. The conflict gave rise to accusations of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and ‘genocide’ and resulted in a toll of more than one million displaced persons either as external or internal refugees.\(^{33}\)

In Darfur alone, between 2003 when violence broke out and 2006, at least a million persons were internally displaced and forced to flee their homes in addition to the hundreds of thousands who fled into neighbouring countries like Chad and Central African Republic.\(^{34}\) Humanitarian agencies reported that the conflict left more than two million people homeless and the number continued to rise with thousands more fleeing every month as the violence went on. The figures quoted were not inclusive of unregistered movements back and forth across States and borders nor the tens of thousands who suffered and died along the way.\(^{35}\)

**Remote cause of the Conflict**

The remote cause of the violent conflict in Darfur is rooted in the contradiction between sedentary farmers (Negroids) and pastoralist (Arabs).\(^{36}\) The inability or refusal of the Sudanese State to formulate what constitutes an authentic response to demands of ethnic nationalities resulted in ethnic cleansing which resulted in the displacement of at least 4.9 million

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34. Mamdani M. *op cit.* 164; Many Darfur Massalit fled to Chad for safety during this period. One such group in Chagawa village spent two years (1996 to 1998) in Chad; www.sudantribune.com.
people in Darfur, the Greater Khartoum area, South Kordofan and the ten States of Southern Sudan with unknown numbers of internally displaced people in the other northern and eastern States.\textsuperscript{37} In southern Sudan, over 390,000 people were displaced in 2009 and another 60,000 during the first four months of 2010.\textsuperscript{38} Of this figure, the number of women and children was very high. The increase in the displacement has been a consequence of the heightened inter and intra tribal violence, attacks by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and conflicts between pastoralist communities, poor governance, the proliferation of firearms and land disputes between returning IDPs, refugees and residents, all exacerbated by drought and food shortages.

**Impact of Conflict on Women and Children**

Apart from the challenges faced by displaced persons in general, women, girls and young population, face the extra challenge arising from their vulnerability. War situations turn life into a “living hell” for millions of women and children in the sense that atrocious crimes are committed against their dignity and liberty. They are sexually exploited by the armed forces, government officials and even humanitarian aid-givers.\textsuperscript{39} In addition to these attacks on their person, they are susceptible to post traumatic stress and debilitating depression. This is made worse by debilitating condition of poverty in which they live as analysed below.

**Problems Encountered by Displaced Women**

Some issues appear to be common to most displaced women regardless of their location, even if they play out differently


\textsuperscript{38} [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/sudan](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/sudan) assessed on 26/07/2010.

in different geographical contexts. For example, the women remain responsible for most domestic activities. It has been pointed out in studies that the day-to-day role of women often changes little while the same cannot be said for their displaced male counterpart who no longer are able to engage in any form of employment.\textsuperscript{40} The domestic activities of women are time-consuming and potentially dangerous because the women could get attacked when they go to fetch firewood or water for the use of the family.

In view of the high incidence of sexual violence on women, the rate of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases spread more rapidly during armed conflict and displacement where health services are inadequate or unavailable. In Burundi for example, HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of mortality during the crises, with 40,000 killed by the disease in 2000 alone.\textsuperscript{41}

Security is another problem that is also generally inadequate. This is evidenced by the fact that night patrols meant to ensure greater protection are either absent or infrequent. The responsibility for security generally rests with government of the country within which displacement occurs. In a situation where the State is an active participant in an on-going conflict, the fate of vulnerable categories is better imagined.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{On Children}

Refugees and displaced children may have lost parents, siblings and other key carers, and friends. They may also lose physical items, such as their homes. These children endure traumatic experiences such as war, destruction of their


\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}
homes, violent deaths of family and friends, becoming separated from family, injury, the arrest of family members, witnesses to the sexual assault and violation of female members of their families, arrest, detain or tortured themselves, forced recruitment into the army or militias, rape, grave shortage of food, water or other necessities and even hostilities in their new homeland. Statistics show that in areas affected by the conflict in Sudan, a child under 5 years dies every 3 seconds because they lack simple vaccinations and medications, adequate food and clean water.\textsuperscript{43}

Sudan is one of the countries with the worst records of forced child recruitment.\textsuperscript{44} Such recruitment is contrary to humanitarian principles on the protection of internal displacement which establishes special guarantees for internally displaced children and young people in order to protect them from taking part in hostilities. The \textit{lacuna} which seems to exist in the definition of who a ‘child’ is, is solved by Article 77.2 of Protocol I additional to the Geneva Convention which state \textit{inter alia}:

\begin{quote}
The Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{43} Mooney E.: \textit{op cit.}

\textsuperscript{44} Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law in Darfur.

\textsuperscript{45} Internally Displaced persons, Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms (E/CN4/1996/52/Add.2), Part I, Para. 166, 170; Protocol Additional to the
This category of children suffer incalculable harm consequent upon neglect, malnutrition, sexual abuse and growing up under conditions which threaten their physical, emotional and psychological survival and well-being. Indeed, the education of such children is interrupted with lifelong consequences across the continent.

A few of these children may manifest disturbed behaviour and may require specialist support which may be unavailable in a developing country further ravaged by war and destruction. Time spent in a high quality early years setting can be invaluable to a displaced child. Early years services can play an important role in minimising adverse factors and maximising protective ones.

Against this background, it is trite to state that the need for extra protection for women and children is becoming increasingly necessary. The protection of women and children from violence and other forms of abuse particularly in war situations is imperative since they are least able to protect themselves at such periods. Physical, emotional and psychological abuses persist because there are few mechanisms for reporting violence and other human rights violations.

**Impediments to Protection**

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47. See generally, Amnesty International USA, Sudan: Continuing Human Rights Violation, available at [http://www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org); *Darfur in Flames: Atrocities in Western Sudan*, 16.
There are two principal types of protection that forced migrants require. First, they need legal protection of their rights, particularly from return to situations in which they may be endangered. Second, they need physical protection to ensure their safety and security.

A factor that undermines the legal protection of displaced women is the issue of registration which is necessary, not only to establish legal standing, age and nationality but also to obtain assistance in many locations. In this regard, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which essentially constitutes a bill of rights for IDPs covering prevention, assistance, protection and return, in its Principle 20 states that “every human being has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law”.\(^{48}\) This principle emphasises the responsibility of authorities to issue IDPs vital documents needed to exercise their legal rights and facilitate the issuance of new ones in the event that they are lost or destroyed – passports, personal identification documents, birth and marriage certificates. UNHCR has described the benefits of a functioning registration system thus:

Adequate registration, including the issuance of documentation, is a prerequisite for the legal and physical protection of refugees. First, accessing assistance and services in implementing a range of civil rights, including those which are protection-related (tracing, family reunification, freedom of movement, right not to be returned or expelled) flow from acknowledged and recorded refugee identity.

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Registration also ensures that each family member is independently recognised, which has important implications particularly for women and for children. Second, early and proper identification reduces multiple registration and the use of fraudulent identity papers, particularly for the purpose of obtaining additional relief items. Third, registration is necessary to plan and implement refugee programs, to manage camps and to target protection and assistance activities at the field level. Fourth, States, UNHCR and operational partners require reasonably accurate population data to allocate resources, to monitor delivery and to evaluate interventions. Fifth, reliable registration information is necessary for the identification, planning and expeditious implementation of durable solutions.  

Despite the above provision, problems of inadequate processes for registering and providing documentation persist.

Physical insecurity is another big impediment to the protection of displaced women and children. Insecurity being defined as the absence of institutional guarantee against physical, emotional and psychological abuse and peril in the course of undertaking legitimate every day activity. In the conditions of armed conflict in Darfur, where the State is an active participant in the ongoing conflict and displaced

persons are under its suzerainity, the security of displaced persons cannot be said to be in safe hands.

The Darfur Humanitarian Crisis and Vulnerable Social Categories
The Sudanese government had a legal obligation to provide an environment in which humanitarian organizations can effectively and safely deliver humanitarian assistance to the displaced population. However, the attitude and response of the Sudanese government to the displaced impeded the ability of the international agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance by the refusal of the government in accepting the delivery of humanitarian aid which worsened the situation of the displaced. This refusal by the Sudanese government is a violation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols as well as customary international law which requires that States consent to and facilitate humanitarian assistance conducted without adverse distinction, where failure to do so may lead to starvation or otherwise threaten the survival of a civilian population as was the case in Darfur.

One of the ways in which the delivery of humanitarian assistance was restricted in Darfur was due to the general insecurity, targeted attacks on humanitarian personnel and bureaucratic restrictions imposed upon humanitarian organizations and their staff. In November 2008, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes reported that attacks on humanitarian personnel reached an

51. Office of Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan; UN Resident and Humanitarian Co-ordinator: ‘Darfur Humanitarian Profile No 33: October 2008.
‘unprecedented level’ with 11 staff killed, 189 staff abducted, 261 vehicles hijacked, 172 assaults on humanitarian premises and 35 ambushes and looting of convoys in 2008 alone. Further restrictions took the form of the expulsion of 13 international NGOs and the revocation of the licenses of three national NGOs operating in Darfur in March 2009. 7610 aid workers were affected by the expulsions. The expulsion left an estimated 1.1 million people without food, 1.5 million without healthcare and more than a million without drinking water. This expulsion, undoubtably, affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of the very poorest and most vulnerable Sudanese people, women and children being in the majority. It is not surprising therefore, that a warrant of arrest was issued by the International Criminal Court against the Sudanese President Omar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir because of his complicity within the context of the war and the consequences thereof.

The Sudanese government was unmindful of the fact that humanitarian assistance is not just about providing the material aid that people need but also about working to change the circumstances that block access to basic services, particularly for the vulnerable and marginalised. Traditionally, humanitarian efforts focus on providing food, medical supplies, water and shelter needs, while placing less emphasis on the peculiar needs, safety and security of women

and children. With regards to the vulnerable category of women and children, responses to internal displacement regularly de-prioritize the protection, assistance and re-integration needs of this category of persons. If IDPs women and children are not being protected and assisted, however, it means invariably that most IDPs’ needs are not being met. Ensuring protection and assistance for internally displaced women and children therefore is not a marginal issue but is central to the effectiveness of any response.

In the past, greater policy attention has been brought to the issues of displaced women and children both within the United Nations system and many non-governmental organizations. However, much still needs to be done, especially in implementing policies to improve protection of displaced women and children. Thorough assessment of the needs of these social categories should be made. Programs that respond effectively to their needs should be designed and implemented.

Protection is at the heart of the responsibility that the international community bears towards refugees and displaced persons. Forced migrants as a group are doubly disadvantaged and thus vulnerable to actions that threaten their protection. Firstly, they are victims or potential victims of human rights abuses, conflicts and other acts of aggression. Secondly, they are outside their home communities and therefore unable to afford themselves of the protection that their government is expected to provide. Therefore, there should be responses in situations of internal displacement and attention should be paid to material assistance needs and to the protection of the physical security and human rights of the displaced.

Along with all other refugees and displaced persons, women need protection against forced return to their countries or communities of origin, security against armed attacks and other forms of violence, protection from unjustified detention, the ability to enjoy their social and economic rights and access to such basic items as food, shelter and clothing. They need protection against sexual and physical abuse and exploitation and protection against sexual discrimination.

This is because, prosecuting those who attack or exploit women has proven difficult in many situations. The women are often reluctant to talk about the attacks and to go through the emotional and sometimes threatening process of identifying and testifying against the culprits. The perpetrators may be individuals in position of authority, and those representing the interests of the women are unable or unwilling to bring them to account.

In Sudan, the problematic of protecting IDPs within the ambit of existing legislation comes to the fore. The gross inadequacy of existing Sharia laws especially the 1991 Penal Code to protect abused and raped women is glaring. The law prescribes that rape victims identify by name and place of residence their assailants if the courts and police are to give due attention to reported cases of rape. The legal system also requires that the victim provides at least four (4) male witnesses to testify seeing the rape incident. This condition, all reasonable persons will agree is difficult to fulfil in peace time what more during war. The Sudanese 1991 Penal Code treats rape as any other criminal offence. Ironically, on some occasions, women impregnated by rape have been accused of committing adultery and have been punished instead of the perpetrators.

Sudan enjoys the notorious distinction of being among the few countries that have categorically rejected adherence
to the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It also holds a negative view on the protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and on the rights of women in Africa. Consequently, the violated Sudanese woman has a meagre chance of protection under national laws.

Both victims and perpetrators of rape and other atrocities in Darfur share many denominators such as the practice of Sunni Islam, they speak Arabic and have a relatively homogeneous socio-cultural belief. Therefore, the accusation of racism levelled against the Sudanese State is plausible. The racial tinge of the crimes against the people of Darfur comes to the fore as the scorch earth policy employed by the security forces and their allied militia is directed against civilian population that are overwhelmingly women and children belonging to specific ethnic groups. Racism and discrimination were also noticed in numerous reports of rape and humiliation of women that are exclusively committed by males from certain ethnic groups against specific groups of women because of their ethnic/tribal origins. Therefore, it can be said that the response of the Sudanese State was to resort to racist propaganda and to instigate violence against vulnerable social categories of women and children.

From the foregoing, it is recommended that the following steps be taken to improve the physical protection of refugees and displaced women and children not only in Sudan but in Africa at large.

There is need to improve upon the design of displaced persons and refugee women’s camps to promote greater physical security. Measures that should be implemented include security patrols, improved lighting and physical barriers to the access of armed persons to camps:

The provision of gender-sensitive training for guards, police, military units and others who come in contact with refugee and displaced women;

Ensuring greater participation of refugee and displaced women in decisions affecting their security such as mechanisms to improve the reporting of physical and sexual protection problems;

The establishment of effective mechanisms for law enforcement to ensure that abusers are identified and prosecuted for their offenses;

Addressing protection concerns particularly to refugee and displaced women in all aspects of the programs;

Children of school age should as much as is possible be removed from the theatres of armed conflict to protect them from physical harm, allow for the continuation of their education in an atmosphere that will ensure psycho-social support and a well rounded development;

Prioritization of protection and assistance needs of vulnerable categories by gathering disaggregated data which will factor in gender and age in order to identify specific needs of women and children.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this discourse began with examining the Darfur crisis from the context of Sudanese history and the inability of its State structures and institutions to meet the challenges of rapid ecological changes, democratization of access to power and the formulation of an authentic response to the right of nationalities to self determination.

The conflict in Darfur does not fall into the category of conventional conflicts executed by persons knowledgeable about the rules of warfare. This has resulted in high non-
combatant casualties of war and large scale displacement of persons from their places of habitual residence.

Consequently, from the foregoing, it has been opined that the solution to the problem of Darfur lies in a regionally negotiated peace, reform of power in Sudan and the reform of land and governance systems within Darfur.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, the conflict in Sudan and the rest of African countries can only be avoided or ameliorated when governance related issues that precipitate crisis are clearly identified and strategies to meet the challenges which these issues throw up are drawn and implemented.

African States are therefore called upon to enforce the minimum humanitarian standard which is the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement for the protection of the vulnerable categories of the aged, physically challenged, women and children. Investing in the protection of women and children during conflict, restoring stability and sowing the seeds of long-term recovery are essential to the future of Africa. These standards must be pronounced mandatory by the African Union to all African States that are signatories to the Convention and must be adhered to by all combatants in any given conflict. The violation of these standards should draw instant reprisal from the African Union.

The chapter also posits that the majority of post-colonial African States risk repeating the Sudanese experience unless their institutions develop the capacity to democratize access to political power, State institutions and meet the challenges thrown up by the rapidly changing ecological conditions that threaten peaceful co-existence between groups of varied economic interest living side by side in communities. If the crisis in Sudan is an indicator of likely conflicts in Africa and the world, it is opined that conflicts within this century will be hinged on access to depleting and non-renewable life

\textsuperscript{57} Mamdani M. \textit{op cit} : 11.
sustaining resources of land and water. The depletion of the great lakes may throw up international conflicts particularly in backward and non-industrialised countries with grave consequences for refugees and IDPs.