

# **Making a Living in Rural Sudan**

**Production of Women,  
Labour Migration of Men,  
and Policies for Peasants' Needs**

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# List of Abbreviations

BIZ	Bremer Informationszentrum für Menschenrechte und Entwicklung
DAWN	Development with Women for a New Era
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EIU	Economic Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
<i>FR</i>	<i>Frankfurter Rundschau</i> , a daily newspaper
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IZA	Informationszentrum Afrika e.V. Bremen
LS	Sudanese Pound
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
ODA	Overseas Development Agency
SPLA	Sudanese People's Liberation Army
SSIP	Sozialwissenschaftliche Studien zu internationalen Problemen
SSU	Sudanese Socialist Union
UAE	United Arab Emirates
ULA	Unregistered Land Act
UNCED	United Nations Conference of Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSNA	United Nations System of National Accounting
US	United States
WFP	Women Food Programme
WID	Women in Development

# Conversions

1 sack (1 *shawal*) (measure of capacity): 90 kg of grain

1 sack: 50 kg of sugar

1 *kora*: nearly 1 kg of grain

1 *mid*: about 3 kg of millet

30 *mid*: about 1 sack of millet

1 *rotul*: 0.44 kg

1 *feddan*: 1.038 acres or 4200 square metres

1 acre: 0.963 *feddan*

1 *mukhammas*: 0.5 ha

1 Sudanese Pound (LS) = 100 piastres

1 US\$: 4.50 LS in January 1988 (official rate)

1 US\$: 190 LS in January 1993



# 1 Introduction

Sudan appears to be a country without hope. Whether considered from the economic, the social or the political perspective, it is down at the bottom of the list. In the international wealth scale, measured by gross national product (GNP), it held place 115 at the beginning of the 1990s (UNDP, 1992, p. 128). According to the human development index (HDI), which combines average life expectancy at birth, literacy rate and purchasing power parity, Sudan has been ranked even lower, at position 145 among 160 countries covered by UNDP. Sudan's political influence in the world is negligible, and internally it has been torn apart by a civil war which has been raging in the country for nearly 30 years. Economic development indicators depict a country with the majority of people depending on agriculture, a low degree of industrialization, a disproportionately large and costly public sector, a high rate of consumer price inflation, and a state budget hit by soaring foreign debt and immense war expenditure. The average annual growth of Sudan's real gross domestic product (GDP) was 2.5 per cent between 1980 and 1988 (Mattes, 1993b, p. 166), and between 1989 and 1992 it varied from -6 to 9.6 per cent (Wohlmuth, 1994, p. 204; The World Bank 1992). The high variations occurred because agricultural productivity in the 'traditional' and mechanized farming sectors depends on the quality of the rainy seasons, and in the irrigated sector it is determined by the uncertain supply and the soaring cost of fuel. The balance-of-payment deficit has also held back GDP growth; at the beginning of the 1990s, import expenditures were about twice as high as the country's export earnings (*Horn of Africa Bulletin*, vol. 7 no. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1995). During the last few years, newspapers have been reporting tremendous numbers of displaced people and refugees due to the war, which has become an additional burden for the Sudanese economy and shaken social life throughout the country. Moreover, frequent droughts which at times culminate in famines and ever-growing poverty and misery in towns as well as in the countryside characterize the present situation in Sudan.

How do the people of this country live? How did they get into these adverse conditions, and how do they cope with them?

These questions are pursued throughout this book with the intention, firstly, of understanding the present situation, and, secondly, of

finding an approach by which the living conditions of the Sudanese could be improved. However, it would be impossible to cover the whole country in all its diversity with the necessary thoroughness. A more careful analysis is guaranteed if the study is restricted to a limited area. Because between 70 and 80 per cent of the Sudanese live in the countryside, the emphasis of this study is on the living conditions in the rural areas. The western Sudanese state of Darfur is considered as a microcosm where most of the characteristics shaping rural life in Sudan can be observed. The analysis therefore concentrates on this part of the country. A thorough study of the north Darfurian small town of Kutum provides the empirical basis from which particular information is drawn. Other areas are taken into account where necessary, to understand the context or in order to point out specific differences or common ground.

In order to analyze the living conditions in rural Sudan, a concept is required which includes the relevant aspects of maintaining the way of life. The concept should include the possibility that conditions of life change. It needs a dynamic component. In recent publications, the notion of 'livelihood' has been appearing (Chambers, 1988; Grown and Sebstad, 1989; Maxwell (ed.), 1991). Applying the notion of 'sustainable rural livelihoods', Chambers seeks to link food security and environmental concerns, areas which originally were analyzed separately. By adding 'sustainability' to 'livelihood', Chambers points out a long-term perspective. In this he transcends previous approaches, which worked with such terms as 'survival strategies' and 'coping strategies', and tended to single out ways of behaviour which had been observed during times of starvation. These approaches failed to put the 'strategies' they identified into a context which is valid not only during periods of stress, but also during 'normal' times. Grown and Sebstad (1989, p. 941) define 'livelihood' as the total of activities, resources and chances people make use of in order to secure individual as well as communal existence. They consider food security to be the basis of 'livelihood security'. De Waal (1989), on the other hand, through his empirical results, rejects the theory that food security is the principle factor of livelihood security. His findings suggest that famine is rather a crisis of livelihood, not primarily a crisis of access to food. Maxwell (1991) departs from the findings of recent research on food insecurity and sketches a concept of 'livelihood security' in which the problem of access to food is set in a wider context. This comprises non-food expenditure, preserving the assets needed to generate livelihood in the future, as well as preserving

the social relationships and claims which may provide buffers in times of economic hardship (Maxwell, 1991, p. 2). The analyses of Chambers and Maxwell suggest a notion of 'livelihood' which transcends economic and ecological spheres. Maxwell considers social relations to be crucial to creating and maintaining livelihood security.

A livelihood concept appears to be suitable as a framework for analyzing how people live in rural Sudan. It is put in concrete methodical terms in Chapter 2. In contrast to the approaches which focus on food security, and in contrast to de Waal (1991, pp. 69, 77), who concludes that the accent has to be put on public health and entitlement to livestock, in this book it is assumed that 'livelihood' encompasses many more aspects. The outcome of previous field studies in different areas of Sudan between 1983 and 1988<sup>1</sup> and reviews of the relevant literature suggest that four main strings of research promise to provide important elements for a 'livelihood approach'. These are:

1. rural development and the living conditions of peasants;
2. food insecurity;
3. the specific situation of rural women; and
4. migration.

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development has been an issue of academic discussion since the mid-1970s, when the shortcomings of the green revolution were seen and the basic-needs strategy was set up as an internationally recognized priority. In the literature on Sudan, this was reflected in critical assessments of the breadbasket strategy (Oesterdiekhoff and Tait, 1979; Tetzlaff and Wohlmuth, 1980; Oesterdiekhoff and Wohlmuth, 1980, 1983). The evaluation of the agricultural policy revealed that the expansion and modernization of the irrigated and mechanized sectors of rural production, which were a top priority of development policy, tended to impoverish the majority of peasants who were producing in the 'traditional' sector. The changes in peasant living conditions and their reflection in social relations subsequently became a matter of research. Chapter 3 of this book presents the economic and social relations within peasant groups and between peasants and society at large. These relations are regarded as basic sectors of livelihood.

## FOOD INSECURITY

Many studies on famine and food security appeared after the famine of 1983–85 in Darfur (ILO, 1985; de Waal, 1989; Maxwell (ed.), 1991). The famine seriously questioned the development path taken in Sudan so far. Consequently it was reassessed and criticized anew. Connections were established between rural development and food security. The main result of the famine research has been that people affected by famine make use of a range of options in order to overcome the period of starvation and to maintain a basis on which their livelihood can be secured in the future. However, as the analysis of aid interventions shows, this local response has been widely neglected in favour of a top-down approach. In this book, food security is assumed to be a most sensitive part of livelihood security which is dealt with separately in Chapter 4.

## RURAL WOMEN

The UN 'Decade of the Woman' 1975–1985 has initiated a spread of field studies on women's position in economy and society in most countries of the world, including Sudan. Emphasis was put on women's work in the numerous analyses of the gender-specific division of labour that followed.<sup>2</sup> Scholars who concentrated on women studies tried to connect this issue with rural development and food security, recognizing that frequently women are responsible for food production for direct consumption by rural families. This led to the demand to include women particularly in development projects. However, researchers in the fields of rural development and of food security, on the other hand, only hesitantly took up the results of women's studies in their approaches. In Chapter 5 of this book, the specific functions women have in livelihood security are discussed. Women's particular roles in food procurement and reproduction are analyzed on the basis of the empirical results found in rural Darfur.

## MIGRATION

Migration theories have been discussed for many decades. Migration concerns fundamental development which is closely linked with urbanization and industrialization and concomitant shifts in the labour

markets. The focus of research therefore tends to be on the supply of the labour markets in towns, large-scale agro-industrial or agricultural schemes, and international centres of production, and, consequently, on the reasons why individual migrants leave their rural home areas (Oesterdiekhoff and Tait, 1979; Zahlan, 1981; O'Brien, 1983; Eltahir and Ali, 1987; Richards and Waterbury, 1990). The process of decision-making in the migrants' home areas and the local impact of rural emigration have rarely been analyzed (Sharif, 1978; de Waal, 1989, Alnagarabi, 1992; Grawert, 1992). Even connections with rural development, the situation of women, and food security are scarce.<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 6 of this book migration is regarded as a measure taken to secure livelihood by diversifying sources of income and goods within a community.

\* \* \*

Scholars tend to analyze each of these strands separately or at best to combine two of them. A livelihood approach in contrast has to be based on all of them. In this book, this broad basis will be constructed step by step. The whole analysis is guided by the assumption that the four areas presented above are closely interrelated. 'Livelihood security' is regarded as being the connecting issue, and the four fields are considered to be integral parts of it.

In Chapter 7 the interrelations of the four 'pillars' of livelihood are elaborated on. The main sectors of livelihood are visualized in a 'livelihood model'. In the second part, policies required to meet peasants' needs are derived from the livelihood analysis.

Peasant livelihood is not only determined by the economic, social, political, and cultural activities of individuals and diverse peasant groups, but also by the larger economic and ecological environment, and, moreover, by political influences. In the final chapter, Chapter 8, the policy requirements for peasants to obtain livelihood security, outlined in Chapter 7, are contrasted with the real Sudanese policies and their impact on the rural population. The scrutiny covers the period between Independence and the beginning of the 1990s.

**Notes**

1. My research in Sudan included socio-economic studies in the Kenana and Assalaya sugar schemes, in the Managil and Gezira cotton schemes, in north Kordofan, and El-Fasher, before I started research in Kutum.
2. Cf. the bibliography on women in Sudan by Weber (1993). Important studies on Sudanese rural women are those of Baxter (1981), ILO (1984), House (1988), and Gruenbaum (1990); many analyses on women's situation are collected in the issues of the *Ahfad Journal*. However, most studies deal with urban women. These are beyond the scope of this study.
3. Sharp *et al.* (1991) was the first to try to connect migration with food security. Research on women and migration includes mainly women migrants, cf. in Ibrahim (1990). The impact of migration on women's life in the home areas has been the subject of several studies collected in Grawert (1994). The connection between migration and rural development refers mostly to the development of the modern agricultural sector and neglects development in the migrants' home areas. Cf. Bernal (1991), and Hasaballa (1986).

## 2 Methodology

The basis of this book is an empirical study of Kutum society and economy, conducted between February and September 1988. It was intended to investigate the ways people secure food in a region where the food supply is unpredictable. Special interest was given to the way women coped with the emigration of men. The impact of migration on food security and on women's social position was a main question behind the research.

Kutum was selected as the site of research for the following reasons:

1. Kutum is located in North Darfur, one of the provinces most threatened by drought and famine. It is a small town, inhabited by about 12 000 people in 1988, surrounded by many villages and some nomadic camps. This site was assumed to be suitable for studying the inhabitants' options of securing food in a food insecure region. Furthermore, it was expected to provide information on the chances and constraints of securing food for different social classes, ranging from farming and animal-raising peasants to a rural petty bourgeoisie.
2. In Kutum the majority of women produce and market food. Therefore this site appeared to be appropriate for an investigation of the economic role women played and of the extent of their market integration. Research on gender relations and the social position of women in this area was also expected to make possible an assessment of their non-economic contributions to securing their families' subsistence.
3. Kutum is a place known for its high male emigration. It was thus considered convenient for an analysis of the impact on the economic and social situation of the family members, especially the female ones, who were left behind by the migrants. Moreover, the setting seemed to be suitable for a comparison between the situation of women who had male migrant relatives with women living in households where the men were present. Considerable differences between the two with regard to wealth and social status were expected to be found.
4. Being located in the far west of Sudan, Kutum was considered to be appropriate for studying the impact of national economic and

political processes on food supply, the decision to migrate, and the socio-economic role of women in a peripheral area. The field study was intended to provide evidence on the means by which Kutum is linked to the national economy and on the way national policies are reflected in local society.

The research aimed at ascertaining the dynamics and tendencies of socio-economic change with regard to food security in an area affected by labour migration. This objective justified a qualitative method of social research, which included first access to the field by collecting information from 'outside' (literature, representatives of organizations, authorities, and institutions in the capital and, in this case, the province capital of El-Fasher), thorough observation of activities in local society, guideline interviews, and frequent analyses of the information obtained. According to the principles of this method, each piece of information was regarded as being provisional. Therefore the guidelines were continuously being reviewed and adapted according to the results of the analyses of the previous interviews and observations. Furthermore, the principle of maximal structural variation of the perspective (Kleining, 1982, pp. 224–53) was observed. This approach requires the selection of the most extremely different points of view on the society concerned. Comparing and analyzing the maximally varied perspectives usually leads to two kinds of information: that which shows common features and that which shows different or even contradictory features. The research is continued until all the differences are solved or at least explicable.

Following these principles, firstly, some information on the gender-specific division of labour and the structure of the labour market of Kutum was obtained from a previous study which had been carried out in Kutum in 1984 by Umbadda and Abdul-Jalil (1985). This study was useful in order to understand the direction of change occurring in this area. The study of 1988 transcends the economic sphere. It deals with the ways people secured their livelihood, taking social and political factors into account.

Secondly, a different perspective was guaranteed by the fact that I was a stranger to Kutum society. As a German woman, my perspective results from my personal socialization which inevitably influences any research situation. In order to bridge the difference between the perspective of Kutum inhabitants and my own as far as possible, the following steps were taken:



1. I took up continuous residence in Kutum with my family and rented an average Sudanese one-room house. Because social life in Kutum is clearly divided according to gender, I communicated with women as often as possible. I talked with them while I was shopping at the market, joined them during visits and feasts in their houses, accompanied them to their working places or when they were on their way to the communal authorities, and called upon them in the gardens and fields. Contrary to the custom in central Sudan, women in Kutum usually work outside the house in the field, garden or market. Therefore, they were not astonished to meet me outside without company (as women in central Sudan were). They appreciated the fact that I was a mother and often addressed me because of my two-year-old son.
2. Having completed a course in Arabic and having stayed in Sudan on two previous occasions, I was nearly fluent in the local language. During my field study in White Nile province in 1983–84, I had gained some insight into the living conditions of Darfurian labour migrants in one of the receiving areas. Previous contacts and three months of preparation of the field study in Khartoum and El-Fasher contributed to my knowledge on Sudanese customs, the economy, society, and on the position of women.
3. I employed a young neighbour whose mother tongue was Zaghawa. She frequently accompanied me during the interviews and introduced me to the women, explained my interest in their situation, and requested them to answer my questions. We encouraged our informants to ask questions in return.
4. We did the guideline interviews without pen and paper or tape recorder in order to maintain a natural atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after each interview, I discussed the answers with my assistant and we eventually cleared up misunderstandings. Then I wrote down the course of the talk.

The purpose of all this was to give the perspective of Kutum women scope to flow into both the progress and the results of the research.

Thirdly, in order to vary the perspective within the society itself, I carried out guideline interviews with extremely different groups of people, varying in class, gender, age, occupation, and ethnic group. I did qualitative interviews with 82 women and interviewed some of them several times. The questions focussed on women's living conditions in different social classes. According to the results of the continuous analyses of the interviews, I changed the questions in the

guidelines step by step from rather general ones to more and more detailed ones. The aim was to gain an insight into women's responsibilities, decision-making and attitudes, as well as into the economic and social contributions to their families' livelihood. During the interviews, the women occasionally seized the opportunity to determine the way the discussion was running. In these cases the discourse frequently took a turn that I, caught in my own socio-cultural thought, had not expected. These were key situations which influenced the following interviews and widened the perspectives included in this research. The women, on the other hand, appreciated hearing news from other areas in Sudan and from the capital. Mainly educated women were interested to hear about life in Germany.

At the same time, members of other social groups were interviewed using specific guidelines.<sup>2</sup> The results created a differentiated picture of the ecological and economic conditions, the means by which people secured their livelihood, social life, the power structures within families and the community, gender relations, local history, and the local political situation.

## THE LIVELIHOOD SECTORS

After this general survey, the activities of a broadly varied sample of families, including all classes, ethnic groups, age groups and other possible factors of difference were analyzed. As a result, the following set of livelihood sectors was identified:

1. Agriculture and horticulture
2. Animal husbandry
3. Gathering and hunting
4. Other productive activities
5. Capital transactions
6. Communal, intra-kin, and intra-familial sharing and redistribution
7. The market
8. Employment
9. Specific activities of women
10. Public support
11. Future-orientated activities.

Table 2.1 presents a survey of the livelihood sectors, which are subdivided into factors, set out in the left column, and guides to analysis.

Table 2.1 Survey of livelihood sectors

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Guide to analysis</i>
<b>1. Means of livelihood gained from agriculture and horticulture</b>	
Availability of land	Land tenure systems and access to it, size of land
Use of land	Productive use, old age security, marketable value, speculation, leasing, renting out
Means of production	Types, quality, ownership, distribution, availability of input, access to technical equipment
Conditions of production	Seasons, climatic preconditions, fertility, crops, methods of cultivation, schedules, ecological conditions, methods of soil and water conservation, consumption habits
Labour	Types: family labour/composition of families with regard to productivity, working groups under reciprocal or other conditions, sharecroppers, hired labour, self-exploitation, etc. terms: permanent, temporary, seasonal, daily Costs: unpaid, paid in kind/money/share of harvest/reciprocal labour/etc.
Use of output	Family consumption, redistribution in kinship/community, storage, sale/access to markets, taxes/tributes
<b>2. Means of livelihood gained from animal husbandry</b>	
Availability, ownership, and types of animals	nomadism, pastoralism, keeping domestic animals, animals for transport/ploughing
Conditions of husbandry	Availability of and access to fodder and water, free routes, ranching, stables, climate, environmental conditions
Labour and use of output (as in 1)	
<b>3. Means of livelihood gained from gathering and/or hunting</b>	
Availability of crops/game	Seasons, distance, types, environmental conditions, climate
Labour and use of output (as in 1)	
<b>4. Means of livelihood gained from other productive activities</b>	
Types of activities	Processing crops or animal products, handicrafts, construction, etc.

Table 2.1 Contd.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Guide to analysis</i>
Availability and provision of input	Access to markets; collecting or buying basic materials like fuel, water, straw, mud, sand, stones, wood, cloth, artificial material; domestic, processed domestic, or imported input
Labour and use of output (as in 1)	
<b>5. Means of livelihood gained from capital transactions</b>	
Access to capital	Credit availability, conditions for access, beneficiaries/people excluded, saving rates, joint saving, capital accumulation, borrowing
Use of capital	Investment (individually or pooled), innovation, taking over productive technologies, hoarding, common wealth formation
<b>6. Means of livelihood gained from communal, intra-kin, and intra-familial sharing and redistribution</b>	
Type of exchange	Food, products, money, material, tools, labour (as in 1), assets (type, profitability, persons benefitting), services (type, persons involved), immaterial goods (status, social security, personal acceptance, honour, entitlement to future service in return, privilege, political influence, averting pressure or coercion, etc.)
Conditions	Gift, loan, credit (system, lending institution/ persons, interest rate), exchange good or service (type, persons involved), relation of dependence (type, persons involved), reciprocal, etc.
Ways and measures of transfer	Importance of power relations, age, gender, social status, relations of dependence, control, cultural/ social norms, tradition of labour division, etc.
<b>7. Means of livelihood gained from the market</b>	
Type of goods	Goods locally produced, national products, imported goods
Type of traders	Peasants, farmers, small producers, petty traders, middlemen, merchants, wholesalers
Destination of peasants' produce	Local, village, town, capital, city market, export

Table 2.1 Contd.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Guide to analysis</i>
Market conditions	Supply, demand, dependence on seasons, infrastructure, transport, access to markets, market information, determinants of prices, cash economy or bartering, reciprocal transactions, auctions, fees and taxes, legal or illegal (smuggling, theft)
Use of profit	Spending on food or on other items, sharing with family members, with others, saving, investment (type, place), hoarding, banking
Type of customers	Social classes, ethnic group, age, gender
Expenditure	Types of goods demanded according to social class, seasons of demand, prices and price fluctuations, consumption patterns and changes
<b>8. Incomes from employment</b>	
Types of employment	Professional, government employee, employee in private enterprise or services, skilled or unskilled worker, self-employed
Place of employment	Local, rural, village, town within the country, abroad
Terms of employment	Permanent, regular, temporary, daily; type of contract/without contract; wage rates; payment in money, kind, reciprocal; payment regularly/irregularly
Distribution of wages/salaries	Spending on food or other items, persons obtaining a share, investment (type, beneficiaries, place); receivers of remittances, use of remittances, regularity and ways of sending
<b>9. Specifically female livelihood-securing activities</b>	
Upbringing of children	Persons involved, health status of mothers and children, actual and desired numbers of children, food supply of children, scope of children's activities, what is allowed and what is not
Care of elderly and sick people	Persons involved, access to medical treatment, type of work for care and health
Family food supply	Women's share in subsistence food production, ways of and equipment for food processing and cooking, activities connected with food supply (collecting wood, water, wild crops, herbs, etc.)

Table 2.1 Contd.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Guide to analysis</i>
Household work	Types, equipment, persons sharing the work with the woman, degree of hygiene
Care of domestic animals	Types, use, how they are kept, supply of fodder, persons sharing the work with the woman
Services	Types, persons involved, conditions: dependent or reciprocal, legal or illegal
Social relations	Marital status and respective obligations, decision-making fields, social status, responsibilities, rights, and obligations of women within the household, family, and community, social and cultural constraints affecting women with regard to labour, occupation, flexibility, entitlements, redistribution of goods, materials, tools, food, money, labour, information, physical and mental help, and so on among women's circles, types of circles and membership, conditions of participation in organizations and political institutions
<b>10. Means of public livelihood support</b>	
Subsidies	Type/products, distributing institutions, access
Social services	Types, distributing institutions, access, availability, fees
Agricultural and veterinary services	Extension services, counselling, training, environmental protection programmes, water supply, plant protection, supply of medicine, vaccination campaigns, fees
Credit	Distributing institutions, availability, conditions, access
Infrastructure	Supplying institutions, types, range, beneficiaries, prices, state, maintenance, access
Emergency prevention	Storage facilities, distribution of food or basic goods during periods of starvation, employment programmes
Cooperation	Levels of cooperation (local leaders, NGOs, individuals, etc.), with peasants status and influence of partners, payment, relations of dependence
<b>11. Preparing future livelihood security</b>	
Upbringing of children	Responsibility, caretaker, child labour, child health

Table 2.1 Contd.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Guide to analysis</i>
Education	Selection of beneficiaries, age, number, gender, type of education, period, degree obtained, places of schools/training centres/other institutions
Investment	Type, effect, beneficiaries, period of redemption, dependence on and availability of further inputs

On the basis of this table further guidelines were prepared in order to collect information systematically from a broad spectrum of informants on the specific factors.

## THE LIVELIHOOD NETWORKS

The livelihood approach aims at identifying trends which determine peasant actions in a long-term perspective. It takes into account that securing livelihood is a social process by which peasants adapt to ever-changing conditions. Therefore questions on the past were included in the guidelines. The answers made possible an assessment of the importance of each sector and, within sectors, of each factor during different seasons, times of scarcity, and eventually times of abundance. Also variations among social classes, ethnic groups, age groups, and genders were ascertained.

Incorporating the dynamics of livelihood, the household, which is the common unit of analysis, turned out to be insufficient to cover the extended relations peasants mobilized to secure their livelihood. A household approach tends to represent a reduced, though important set of peasant livelihood options. To characterize the specific socio-economic relations among peasants, I suggest the term 'livelihood network'. A livelihood network is seen as including all persons who participate in the livelihood of one community and therefore are regarded as its members. During the field study, a network approach was applied in addition to the household approach in order to encompass socio-economic units which transcended the household. This refers for example to associations of members of several households, long-term migrants, and communal groups. Livelihood networks were identified by selecting a small number of highly diversified households. The household members were asked questions which mainly

contained aspects of social relations. The questions referred to sources of livelihood during certain events of the past years, the people involved in providing these sources, and their relations with the particular family members. Scope for discussion was always large during the interviews and gave room to go beyond the network of the respective family. Thus, besides a feature of the family network, preliminary information was obtained on institutions at community level which were focal points of further networks, for instance local representatives, religious leaders, or influential families. Parallel to the interviews in the households, the analysis was continued with these persons.

Ideally this survey ends when the networks start to overlap. During the field study in Kutum, the network approach was not applied precisely enough to reach this point. Nevertheless, the information on social relations which had been collected was evaluated with regard to the types of networks existing, the temporal, spatial, and social dimensions they covered, and the range of deviations according to class, ethnic group, and other social categories. The livelihood options made available by various parts of different networks have been included in the list of livelihood factors, and their relevance assessed. This analysis provided the main part of the information on the local patterns of livelihood options and the respective social conditions of access.

## QUANTIFYING LIVELIHOOD DATA

Quantifying livelihood options provides a statistical snapshot of one specific situation which might change soon after. It cannot capture the dynamics of livelihood-securing activities. The relevance of each option at a given moment might be assessed by a quantitative household survey, which is either repeated several times or includes questions on the activities performed over a year. The latter type was carried out in Kutum in September 1988, when the qualitative appraisal had finished and the social processes shaping peasant livelihood had been clarified.<sup>3</sup> The survey was carried out in cooperation with the head of the local governmental Office for Youth, Sports and Social Welfare. It was done by four women interviewers, all of them educated residents of Kutum town. At a training meeting they were asked to stick to the following rules:



1. *Selection of the houses where the questionnaires were to be presented:* Size and building material of the houses had to be representative, for instance, if a town quarter or village consisted mainly of huts, the questions had to be asked mainly in huts, and only one or two in mud houses, and so on. Street and area inside the quarter or village had to be varied. If no person was present, the neighbouring house was to be visited. This part of the study was occasionally checked by the head of the Youth Office, who assisted in selecting representative houses.
2. *Selection of the interview partner:* The person to be interviewed had to be a woman, preferably the female head of household or the wife of the male head of household, otherwise the closest female relative.
3. *Interviewing:* The interviewer had to follow the questions in the questionnaire and to fill in the answers immediately. If there were conspicuous contradictions, she had to ask further questions and to note her observations in the questionnaire.

In all, 312 questionnaires were distributed according to the numbers of households in the quarters of Kutum and in seven nearby villages (Kambod, Kasab, Karkawi, Hilat Beshir, Fulu, Barari, Siringo). The household numbers were obtained from the councils. The average sample in the villages was 7.6 per cent, in Kutum town the sample included 8.4 per cent of the households.

## PEASANT LIVELIHOOD: A MODEL

The results of the livelihood analysis were very complex. In order to make the sectors of livelihood used in Kutum visible at a glance, a model has been constructed as shown in Figure 2.1.

In contrast to the above methodical instruments which were directed to detailed research at the household and network level, the livelihood model necessarily generalizes options and structures. It is thus suitable to give a rough survey of the socio-economic pattern prevailing at one moment. The minimum requirements to establish the model are a picture of the society, a picture of the basic economic options, and the connections between the two levels.

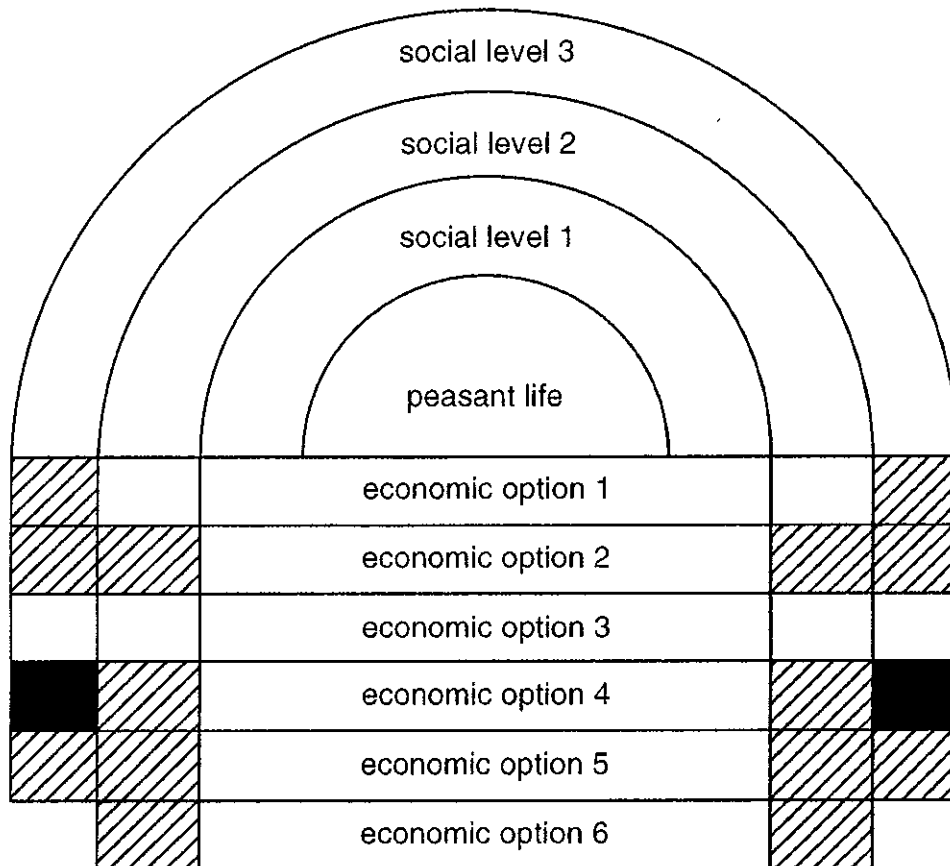


Figure 2.1 'Empty model'

The connections between the social and economic levels are made visible by colouring the sectional planes differently, according to the general frequency of usage of the respective sectors or options of livelihood. The white areas indicate that the usage of the option is widespread, the shaded areas mark a limited usage, and black sectional planes signify no usage of this option at the respective social level. After the presentation of the different aspects of peasant livelihood, in Chapter 7 this model is taken up and the social levels and livelihood options are filled in according to the results of the analysis. The main purpose of the model is to enable analysts to assess how much livelihood options can be extended and diversified and to anticipate shrinkages of livelihood options due to various influences. The model should thus provide scope to insert factors of change (Figure 2.2).

The circle in Figure 2.2 denotes a change-inducing force which affects the social and economic conditions of peasant life. According to the expansion or decrease of options due to the change, the colours of the sectional planes between economic options and social levels vary. The new picture shows peasant livelihood-securing activities in response to changing conditions.

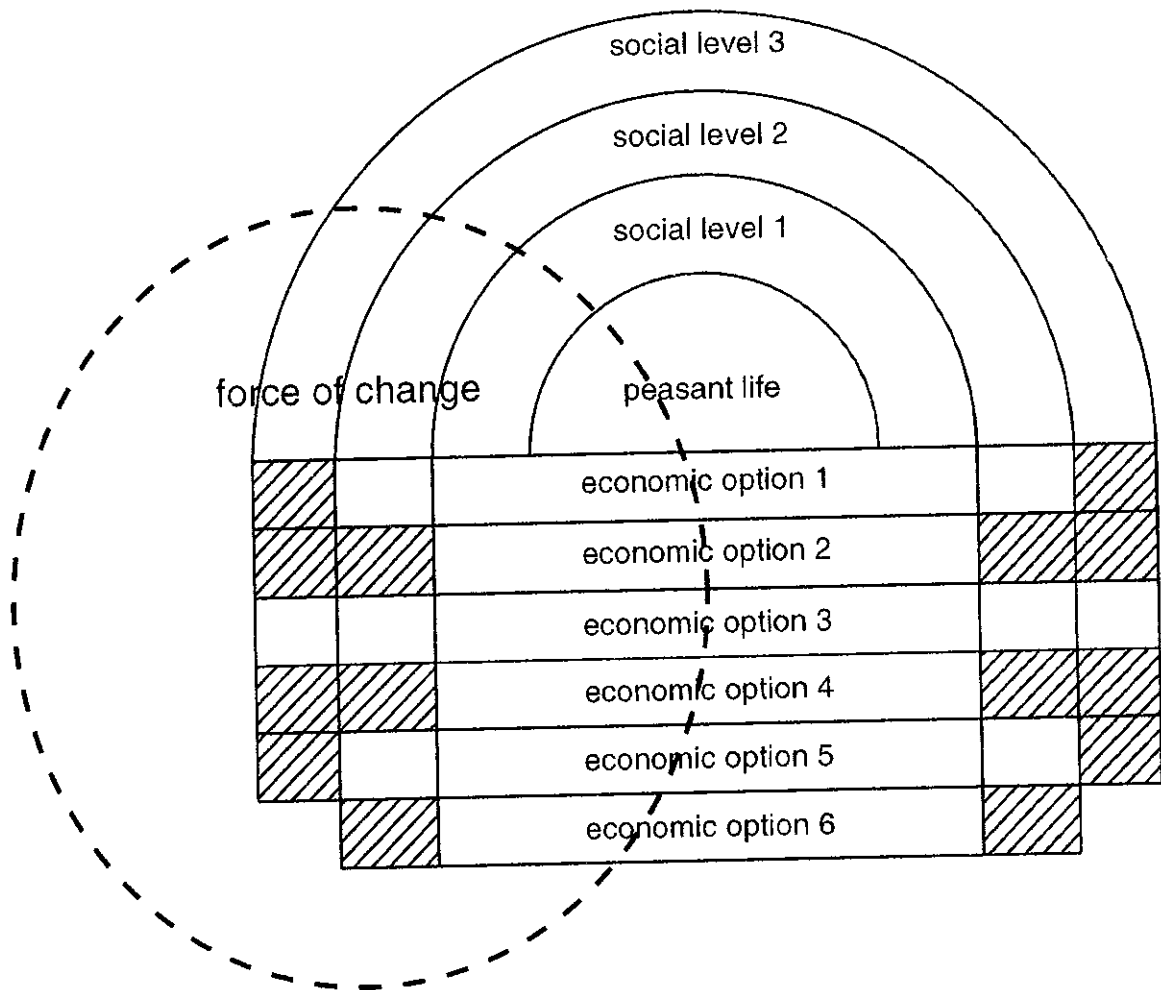


Figure 2.2 Forces of change

In Chapters 7 and 8 this model is applied in order to summarize options and changes of peasant livelihood due to external forces and to show the policy impact on peasant livelihood.

## LIMITS OF THE FIELD STUDY

The field study concentrated on people living in Kutum itself. I visited only three nearby villages personally (Masry, Kambod, Senger). Further information on villages in Kutum region was gained from the councils, some local leaders whom I encountered in Kutum, from many market vendors and immigrant villagers, teachers, midwives, and the only doctor in the region. I take responsibility for mistakes in the analysis which might occur due to the fact that I was seldom in villages.

The situation of the sedentary peasant and gardening families in Kutum with special regard to the women was investigated systematically. Complementary information was gathered from a few village

women and pastoralists. They were helpful for a comparison in order to find out specific characteristics of the sedentary women. But these groups were not studied as thoroughly as sedentary Kutum women. Therefore, the results of these interviews have been introduced into this study with due caution.

Cultural specifications due to ethnic group and religion were not the subject of this study and were thus not investigated in detail. Islam is the religion practiced in the region, and those elements which had obvious impact on social and political life were taken up in this work. A specific study of women and Islam or of differences in religious practice according to ethnic affiliation was not undertaken.

The record only comprises the daily life of women with special consideration to food security and male emigration. This work claims neither to present a comprehensive picture of Kutum society, nor to be exhaustive on the women's situation.

## STYLISTIC REMARKS

Finally, one stylistic particularity has to be explained. Being conscious of the cultural gap between the inhabitants of Kutum and myself induced me to translate and insert several interviews or parts of interviews in the analysis. This has several purposes:

- to serve as a point of departure from where the analysis of a specific subject can be continued;
- to highlight the main thesis of a paragraph;
- to show a particular way of acting, of thinking, or to characterize specific living conditions;
- to enable the reader to judge whether the analysis conforms to the statements of the interviewees or not.

Combining various approaches – starting with the perspective of a white academic woman, varying the perspective by giving extremely different groups a chance to speak, extending this by critical positioning of the researcher (Antrobus, 1989; Charkiewicz-Pluta and Hausler, 1991), surveying households by a standardized questionnaire, and comparing the empirical results with relevant theoretical concepts and with the literature on peasant life in Sudan – yielded material which belongs to different truths. The analytical attempt to join the truths led to the results presented in the following chapters.

**Notes**

1. Umbadda and Abdul-Jalil (1985) report that they did not succeed in getting a representative sample of women gardeners, because women frequently refused to answer the formal questionnaires. During my own field study, no woman refused to answer questions.
2. These were prepared for employees and administrators in the Councils, teachers, judges, social workers, secretaries of unions and social organizations, heads of political parties, traditional leaders, returned labour migrants, craftsmen and petty traders.
3. The questionnaire is available in Appendix C.

