

# **Civil war and livelihoods in Heiban: Nuba mountains of the Sudan**

By: Jamila Elhag A. Hassan<sup>1</sup>

## **ABSTRACT**

Conflict usually seems to have only negative dimension, but it is recognized that conflict may also have a positive dimension and is an essential part of the process of social change (Goodhand 2001). The aim of this paper is to explore the effect of a situation of civil war on the livelihoods of the Nuba people in Heiban town.

Nuba people are inhabitants of the Nuba Mountain Region of Sudan. They are perceived by the international community as one of the most marginalized minorities in the country. The Nuba people have been suffering the consequences of economic marginalization through exploitation of their regional resources since before the colonial era. During the more recent civil war, however, the Nuba people have fought the Government of the Sudan alongside the Sudan People Liberation Army. The war which started as a conflict regarding access and control over resources, has with time mainly been interpreted with reference to tribal distinctions, religious differences and questions of power sharing – an interpretation which seems to create further mistrust among the Nuba population who associated themselves with different tribal origins, languages, as well as moral systems and worldviews.

During the time of warfare, the town as well as the locality was divided both in geographical and population terms, between the two warring parties. Moreover, the war has imposed significant cost upon the civilian population, who were either forced to flee their homes and community or had to stay and suffer the severe situation characterized by death, enmity and mutual mistrust. Still, even though conflicts are usually associated with negative consequences, people have also been able to transform some aspects of their livelihood situation for the better. Thus, despite the severity of the situation, it is possible to identify some improvements in the livelihood situation

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Kjersti Larsen for her extensive discussion and comments on previous drafts of this paper.

of the inhabitants of Heiban town. One may ask, if it is the war situation itself that has made possible for instance improved education opportunities for people of both genders; acquirement of new skills; as well as the emergence of new livelihoods strategies; or perhaps, whether already existing dynamics and capabilities within the society has been brought to the foreground when established authority structures are dismantled as a consequence of the war?

**Key words:** destruction of assets, mistrust, religious tension, displacement, improvement of livelihood.

## INTRODUCTION

The term civil war denotes an intra-state conflict where one, often marginalized, group seeks autonomy or transformation of the state (Goodhand 2001). Civil war can also refer to conflict caused by the fragmentation of the State (Byrne Dec. 1995). Recently, extensive studies on civil war have been carried out with the main focus on the links between conflict and poverty. Most of those studies concluded that chronic internal wars are likely to produce chronic poverty. Therefore, conflict usually seems to have only a negative dimension. However, few studies show that conflict may also have positive dimensions and is an essential part of the process of social change. That is, *violent conflict may lead to the acceleration of processes of social change and the increased differentiation of groups in society*. For example, caste relationships in Nepal have been increasingly challenged (Goodhand 2001, 23).

The aim of this paper is to explore the effect of violent conflict on the livelihoods of Nuba people of Heiban town, with more emphasis on the positive effects and social change. The negative dimension of the war will be mentioned briefly because it is too far extended the same as in other cases.

Data used in this paper was collected between September 2004 and January 2005. Respondents were inhabitants of Heiban town as well as Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the town in urban areas particularly, Khartoum – the capital of Sudan. It is noteworthy to note that only few IDPs had been returned to the town by the time of the research. Different methods were used to collect the data, but major emphasis was placed on various types of interviews and participatory

observations. In addition, wealth ranking and social mapping were used. The purpose of the wealth ranking and social mapping was to ensure that the sampling frame of the households represent the full range of livelihood circumstances to be found in the town. Individual interviews were conducted with the heads of the various households as well as available household's members. Numerous key informants were interviewed such as staff of NGOs, the leader of a CBO, health personnel, community leaders, elderly people, merchants, religious leaders, women representatives, and members of the conflict resolution committee. Collected data was crosschecked by interviewing more than one person on the same topic. Observation was essential to discover new areas to be explored, and to triangulate the collected data. The data collected was analysed by the Sustainable Livelihood Approach. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach is a broad flexible approach. It encompasses whatever affects people's livelihoods. However, its most important component is the assets status of people. Assets status is the base of livelihood because, it determine the type of livelihood strategies (activities) and hence livelihood outcomes - physical necessities and income of people in particular context (Ellis 2000). Hence, poverty is defined in this paper as: '...lack of physical necessities, assets and income' (Chambers 1995). That is, focus of this study will be on lack of assets - tangible and intangible - as a proxy for lack of both physical necessities and income.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **THE STUDY AREA:**

The Nuba Mountains region (the region) is located in the geographical centre of the Sudan and extends over 30,000 square miles of the most fertile land of the country (Jibear 2003; Nadel 1947). Though the mountains dominate the landscape, the area covered by the hills themselves is less than a third of the total area of the region; the remainder is extensive clay plains, some forested, and other farmed (Kaffay 2004). Climatically, the region is classified as sub-humid with annual rainfall estimated as 450– 800 mm per year, and duration period of five to six months (Faris 1989). Administratively, the region belongs to two states - South Kordofan and West Kordofan - and is composed of six provinces, each divided into localities. Heiban - the study area - is the capital of the Heiban locality in the Kadugli province. It is a plains town located at the foot of the Heiban Mountain (*al jabal al aswad*), which borders it on the north side. The town is also surrounded by other mountains and hills. Between the town and the hills are the

farms, and beyond the farms is the forest. A main seasonal stream runs throughout the town from west to east. The stream collects the rainwater and drains it off into the *Abu habil* stream, which is the largest seasonal stream in Kordofan. This stream acted as a natural border and spilt the town between the two warring parties during the wartime. Five Nuba tribes inhabit the town, as well as the locality: Heiban, Otoro, Liera, Tira and Shawi.

### ***The Economy of the Nuba Mountains:***

The Nuba people - including the tribes of Heiban - practice a range of productive activities, such as animal husbandry, hunting and foraging. Farming is, however, the main economic activity, and is practiced by all categories of the population. The farming system in the region is a traditional, subsistence one in which the family use traditional tools to produce a range of crops to cover most of their subsistence needs. This system is based on shifting cultivation, which involves a regular demand of new farmland (Jibear 2003; Suliman, Baechler & Spillmann 2002b; Wood 1971). Socially, livestock ownership in the region, reflects wealth and prestige in the community. Households also own livestock to provide milk, meat and other by-products (Nadel 1947; UNDP 2003). Furthermore, I found that livestock in Heiban is owned essentially for bride wealth payment. In addition, the region is rich in minerals such as gold, iron, copper and uranium. Recent discovery of oil in the neighbouring provinces has raised the economic importance of the region (Jibear 2003). Nuba people of Heiban diversify their livelihoods strategies with wild food collection, trading and seasonal migration. Seasonal migration – to urban towns - used to be practiced by young men in slack periods in order to gain money income to be invested in livestock. All people, however, practice trading in form of selling surplus of agricultural products and collected wild food, which are the main sources of money income.

### ***Inhabitants of the Region and their coexistence:***

The indigenous inhabitants of the region are usually referred to as the Nuba. The size of the Nuba population is estimated differently by different sources. For example, it is estimated to be 1.5 million; about 90% of the total population in the region (Suliman 2002a). Verney (1995) estimated it be 1.6 million and 70 per cent of the region's population, but the latest estimation is about 2.1 million (2002 estimate) and 60 per cent of Sudan population (Orient 2005). In addition

to the Nuba, the region is inhabited by other groups of people such as *Baggara*<sup>2</sup> (Verney 1995); *Jellaba*<sup>3</sup> (Suliman, Baechler & Spillmann 2002b; Verney 1995); and West – Africans (Fellata, Hawsa , and Bargo ) who migrated from West Africa about 300 to 400 years ago (Rahhal 2001b). These groups of people coexisted in the region peacefully before the war, except for minor clashes. The most frequent clashes were between the Nuba and *Baggara*, particularly over pastures and water. Such clashes were normally resolved by the civil administration, that is, Nuba *Makks* and *Baggara Sheikhs*. Otherwise the region had enjoyed decades of peace and mutual trust combined with intermarriage and cultural exchange. Furthermore, some *Baggara* assumed titles and positions in Nuba tribes. However, the extent and limits of these cross-cutting ties varied greatly from one area to another (Suliman 1999b; Suliman 2002a)

### *The Nuba:*

There is dispute among researchers on the origin of the Nuba. As concluded by Faris (1989) the origin of the Nuba is unknown but there is clear evidence that they have been living in their present locations - the Nuba Mountains - before the first *Baggara* immigrations took place more than two hundred years ago. Despite the fact that the Nuba are marked off from the surrounding groups inhabiting the area, researchers collectively concluded that the Nuba are not descendents of a common ancestor and that there is no racial unit between them (Hassab-Alla, I. M. 1992; Jibear 2003; Kaffay 1995; Kaffay 2004). A measure of the variety of the Nuba people could be obtained by looking at the linguistic variety, as summarized by Nadel, 1947: ‘It has been said that there are as many Nuba languages as there are hills<sup>4</sup> [...]’. Stevenson (1984) has classified more than fifty Nuba languages and dialects, clustered into ten groups. However, the common language used by the Nuba today is the Lingua Franca ‘Nuba -Arabic’, but each tribe has its own language. This plurality in the languages is explained by the isolation of each tribe on its hill due to the geographical and natural constrains (Nadel 1947).

Nuba traditions and customs reflect their interaction with the life and milieu around them. These traditions and customs practiced in different occasions of their life, such as sowing, harvest,

---

<sup>2</sup> Cattle herders from different tribes, moved into the region from Darfur (Verney 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Merchants and government officials who came from northern Sudan

<sup>4</sup> It estimated to be more than 99 mountains (Kaffay, 1995).

marriage and death. There is general talk about ‘Nuba culture’ as if it is a shared culture. But actually there is a great variation in culture that gives each tribe its individuality (Faris 1989; Nadel 1947). These variations do not negate that there are similarities such as *kujurism* (Saeed 2001). *Kujurism* is the traditional religion of the Nuba people. This religion was prevalent and it seems to overshadow the concept of deity. The basis of this religion is that the Nuba revere and honour their ancestors. Each Nuba tribe considers their ancestor as their God who directs the descendants’ fate and sends all blessings and calamities. Communications are addressed to the Ancestral Spirit, who is usually supported by gifts. Communications are made through ritual operating priest called by different names in different tribes, but commonly known as *Kujur*. *Kujurs* are first and foremost mediators between people and their Ancestral Spirits (ibid).

*Kujurism* has declined by introduction of Christianity and Islam; many Nuba people have converted to these religions. Today, half of the Nuba population are Muslims and the rest are Christians or follow traditional non scriptural religion (Saeed 2001). Islam is the most prevalent religion in the east, west and northern parts of the Nuba Mountains, while Christianity and traditional non-scriptural religions are dominant in the southern part of the region (including Heiban). This religious diversity in the Nuba Mountains is found also within the family (Suliman 2002a; UNCERO 1999).

### ***History and Roots of the Civil War:***

Generally, Nuba people are perceived by the international community as one of the most marginalized minorities in the Sudan (Verney 1995). I see this marginalization as a result of the “closed district Ordinance”<sup>5</sup> which prevented Nuba’s interaction with the rest of the country as well as preventing the introduction of education in the region (Hassab-Alla, I. M. 1992; Jibear 2003; Kaffay 1995; Salih 1982); combined with the political and economical marginalization and Sudan’s highly uneven pattern of development (Keen 1994); and the chronic exploitation of the Nuba’s regional resources , as I will elaborate below.

---

<sup>5</sup> A policy enforced by the British with attempt to isolate the Nuba people from the rest of the community, in order to preserve and promote the indigenous Nuba culture and traditions, as well as to protect the area from the influence of the Muslims, Arabic culture that had been penetrated into the region (Hassab-Alla, I. M., 1992; Jibear, A. E. M., 2003; Kaffay, J. T. , 1995; Salih, K. e.-D. O. ,1982)

There is no record on the old history of the Nuba. The more recent history of the Nuba goes back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, to the *Tegali* kingdom(1530 -1880s), and the point when *Baggara* began to move to the plains of Kordofan and enforced the Nuba to move to the region now known as the Nuba Mountains (Suliman 1999a). Since the *Tegali* Kingdom, the region has been invaded by other kingdoms, movements and rulers, for gold, slaves and soldiers. Raiding of the region for slaves was especially widespread during the Turku - Egyptian rule (1820 -1885). In this period, *Baggara* were actively engaged in the slave -trade on the one hand and protection agreements on the other hand. The *Baggara* has divided the plains of the region among themselves and drove the Nuba uphill. Driven into the hills, the Nuba turned to terrace farming of the relatively barren hill soil. However, a cooperative relationship grew up between them and *Baggara*. *Baggara* protected the Nuba from the raids of other *Baggara* tribes and received in return grains and slaves (Hassab-Alla, I. M. 1992; Jibear 2003; Kaffay 1995; Suliman 1999b; Wood 1971).

The most massive upheaval and suffering of the Nuba was committed by the Mahdist movement<sup>6</sup>. The Mahdi - founder of the movement - fought the Turku - Egyptian colonial and recruited soldiers for his army from the Nuba. Furthermore, the Mahdi migrated to the Nuba Mountains and resisted the attacks of Turko- Egyptian army from there (Hassab-Alla, I. M. 1992). During the existence of the Mahdi in the region, the Nuba had to provide tribute demanded by him. Many Nuba people resisted the Mahdi and refused to provide the tribute. After the death of the Mahdi, his successor, Khalifa Abullahi, sent a force to subdue the Nuba people. This force committed widespread bloodshed and destruction in the region. Many Nuba people perished and even more were enslaved. In 1898, the Mahdi was defeated by the Anglo Egyptian colonists who occupied the Sudan between 1898 and 1956 (Suliman 1999b). Then the Anglo Egyptian colonists started exploitation of Nuba's land by introducing a large scale mechanized agricultural system, with cotton as a cash crop (Hassab-Alla, I. M. 1992; Jibear 2003; Kaffay 2004; Salih 1982). Because of the above-mentioned economical and political changes in the area, the Nuba become marginalized within what was considered their homeland.

---

<sup>6</sup> A national religious - political movement (1883 -1898), it is developed to the current Umma Party.

### ***Conflict over land and the civil war:***

The success of cotton production brought the region to the attention of international companies and subsequently to the attention of the *Jellaba* (Hassab-Alla, I. M. 1992; Jibear 2003; Kaffay 2004; Salih 1982). The *Jallaba* accessed the fertile land as borrowers and then as owners after purchasing the most fertile plains. In 1968, the Mechanized Farming Corporation supervised the introduction of large-scale mechanized schemes, which were established with loans from the World Bank. These schemes covered most of the clay plains in the region (Verney 1995). The two hundreds farms of the scheme are monopolized by *Jellaba*, except one farm leased to Nuba merchants, four to *Baggara*, and other four to local cooperatives (Suliman 1999b; Suliman 2002a). The Nuba people realized that they were now producing only on the mountainous area, and had lost the ownership of the plains land (Suliman, Baechler & Spillmann 2002b). Recalling the agricultural system held in the region, traditional farmers lost access to new virgin land. Therefore, Nuba's resistance to land appropriation by the state in favour of *Jellaba* and *Baggara* has increased. This was the turning point in the relationship between inhabitants of the region. Therefore, when the civil war in the south resumed in 1983, the Nuba sympathized with southerners. Moreover, individual Nuba people joined the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (ibid). Armed conflict in the region started in 1985 and the Nuba suffered harassment from both SPLA and Government troops. Cattle raiding, villages and farms looting were reported through out the region. Further, frequent burning of villages; arrest and disappearances; and killing of civilians (mainly community leaders and well educated people) was also reported (de Waal 1995; Rahhal 2001b). Despite the fact that land is portrayed by different sources as the initial cause of the civil war, when war is protracted, other factors such as tribal variation, power sharing and using of religion to serve political ends, are seen as cause-factors (Suliman 1999).

### **War in Heiban locality and town:**

Based on data collected during my fieldwork, the war onset in Heiban town was in form of looting of cattle and rape of women. In 1989, most of the young men joined the troops of the rebel (*Khawarij*). A reason cited for joining the rebel troops was failure to defend their cattle and women against the government troops due to lack of weapons. Another reason was to find better refuges. The *Khawarij* lived in the caves and preformed their military activities from the top of

the mountains. And a governmental garrison was based in the town and fought the rebels from there. The *Khawarij* seized the section of the town north of the main stream, while the government army controlled the southern section. In 1990 the war escalated to bombing during the day and raiding and looting during the night or the early morning. Bombing did not often occur during the first years (1989 - 1992), but it increased in the last years. In contrast, raiding happened often. Looting and raiding of cattle and farms was practiced by troops of both warring parties, as a war strategy. Troops of the government looted, raided and burnt villages controlled by the rebels as strategy to create starvation and compel the civilian to move to the government controlled area. The rebel strategy was to secure both food and loyalty of the *Khawarij*. Actually, *Khawarij* sometimes return to their homesteads when they find it difficult to continue in rebellion. To assure their continuation their boss **commander commands** them to commit crime in their families or villages so that they could not return to them. Therefore, the *Khawarij* often raided the town and other villages to loot food, clothes, and livestock. During raiding, they would kill whoever resisted them, which has severe impact on the social relations in the society.

During the war, the locality as well as the town was split in geographical<sup>7</sup> and population terms between the two warring parties. Sometimes, even the members of one household were divided. Thus, there was mutual enmity between the people during the warfare. This division, for some people, was the result of seeking better refuge in whichever area they chose as being safer. Sometimes people would escape from one side to go to the other if they felt it was more secure. People that were caught during their ventures by troops of either side were considered as spies. Captured people would be tortured; some were even shot dead in public in the town, while women dead due to multiple rape. Consequently, the townspeople are up to the fieldwork time suspicious of each other and cautious in their interactions. A cease-fire agreement between the two warring parties in the region was signed on 19th January 2002, and enforced within the next 72 hours. The agreement was renewed in six-month interval until the comprehensive peace agreement was signed on 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2005.

---

<sup>7</sup> There are 35 homesteads in the locality, only seven of them were controlled by the government army during the war.

## **WAR AND LIVELIHOOD:**

The civil war in Heiban has severe consequences on the livelihood of the community. It has stripped both private and public assets possessed by the community. Physical asset, such as water sources, health and education facilities as well as houses, has been destroyed. Furthermore, the building materials and equipment of these facilities have been looted by troops of the government, while the financial asset – cattle – has been looted by troops of both sides. Wildlife is endangered and green vegetation, which was the source of wild food, and money income is destructed. In addition, labour force, which is the main asset possessed by the Nuba of Heiban, has declined. On one hand, most of the households have lost at least one member due to the war. Beside displacement, people have been killed, either directly by weapons or indirectly by diseases and hunger<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, traditional knowledge and skills are likely to be lost due to protracted displacement of much of the labour force to urban towns. People who have been living for long periods in urban areas anticipating to find it difficult to resume agricultural activities, while the generation growing up in the urban area could not practice farming at all. However, displaced people have managed to adapt their new setting and adopt new knowledge, skills, and experiences that enable them to survive. A consequence might be division of labour by displacement. That is, people who remained in the town during the wartime could continue farming activity, while returnees (repatriated IDPs), might not practice farming and pursue livelihoods activities other than farming.

However, I found new practices, attitudes and perceptions that might lead to considerable change in the livelihoods of the community in Heiban. These phenomena could be as consequences of the war, the already existing dynamics and capabilities within the society or both reasons. In the following I will discuss examples of these phenomena:

Farming as the main livelihoods strategy was practiced by almost every one in the community. Every family produced in both crop farm - far farm - and backyard farm. Crop farm is used to produce food and cash crops while the backyard farm is used for food production only. Almost, all of the farming activities are practiced by both genders, but women used to cultivate only the backyard farms. During the wartime, and when men were preoccupied with fighting, women

---

<sup>8</sup> Death due to diseases and hunger is estimated to be more prevalent than death by weapons.

have started cultivating the crop farms. In addition, and as consequence to the decline of the men number in the community, the number of households headed by women has increased, resulting on a correlative increase of the women's responsibilities in the well being of the household. Hence, I argue that war has enforced mobility of the women and enhanced their contribution to the household income, resulting –as I will discuss later - in a considerable change in the disciplinary power. A consequence is a change in women possibility to remain mobile and engaged in new form of activities. This example could be seen as an example for change in gender division of labour, as well as change in the community perception on the social position of the women.

A clear change in the livelihoods strategies is found among the IDPs and returnees. Given that people have been enforced to migrate, they have also entered into communities where they have had access to better education and work opportunities. Few of them have got better education opportunities and practiced different professional jobs. Others, as mentioned above, have adopted new knowledge and skills that enabled them to pursue different kinds of livelihoods strategies than what they used to have in Heiban. Consequently, the market in Heiban, which used to be monopolized by *Jallaba*, is currently, operated by the Nuba only, and new activities, namely, women operated- activities, are emerged. Actually, women involvement in non-agricultural products trading and services is a new phenomenon. Before the war, women contributed to the local economy by buying and selling local products only. But currently, women are engaged in different activities such as renting out beds for travellers, processing and selling of food and women's local perfumes, as well as processing and trading of local products such as dried – okra, which they sell in Khartoum. This change in livelihoods activities reflects the capability of the community to adopt different knowledge and skills when they get access to it. This status could be seen as is brought about by the war (i.e. migration), which facilitated IDPs living in communities with better job and education opportunities.

Due to the above-mentioned marginalization, the community has been educationally victimized since before the war. Children had the opportunity to study up to what is equivalent to the current eighth grade in the locality, and then they competed with the regional students for seats in two secondary schools for boys and one for girls. Therefore, few had the opportunity to continue their

education. However, people who lived in Heiban during the warfare have lost the opportunity for even this level of education. In contrast, most of the people who lived in SPLA controlled area or have been displaced in towns in the north have got access to better education opportunity. Generally, the community is very keen for education and utilize any possible opportunity for better education. Currently, households sacrifice farming for education. Even so, most of the households in Heiban reinvest the livelihoods outcome in human capital by reinvesting in education. They draw on the social capital and send their children to relatives in other areas for better education opportunity. All the same, displaced people minimize their food intake in term of quantity or quality, in order to pay the school fees for the children. By investing in education, households change the composition of the assets they possess, and hence the future livelihoods strategies portfolio. Change in attitude towards education of both girls and boys, indicates that there is awareness among the community about the value of education for development and progress of people. This awareness could be as result of interaction with better-educated communities or it could already exist and the war has facilitated its egression. An upshot could be division of labour by displacement as well as by generations. That is, the old people who remained in the town during the war and some of the returnees who managed to resume farming will continue as farmers, while returnees who could not resume farming as well as the young people who are enrolled in education will end up with jobs other than farming.

Engagement of women in education and training is a new phenomenon. Most of the women used to study only up to grade four and then get married. The war, as mentioned, has enforced women's mobility and enrolment in education and training as unintended consequences. Further, and as it is mentioned above, women have become involved in new work activities which has enhanced their contribution to the household income. Consequently, women's awareness about their rights and different aspects of the life has improved, resulting in improvement of women's participation in both public and private arenas. This improvement is indicated by women involvement, for the first time, in administration and public work such as conflict resolution committee; churches and mosque committees; and health volunteers group. An other example refer to women empowerment is women participation on decision making on their own personal lives such as: Girls started to decide on their future husbands, which used to be decided by fathers only; wives started to be consulted in the second marriage of their husbands; and wives can insist

to divorce her husband and could reject the resolution of the traditional court in this issue, - it used to be binding - and go ahead and appeal to the regional court where she plead against the resolution of the traditional court.. All these examples prove change in the disciplinary power, resulting in change in women participation in decision making in both private and public arenas, and hence empowerment of the Nuba women of Heiban.

Concerning kinship relations among the tribes of Heiban, cousins are siblings; nephews and niece are sons and daughters; and stepparents, wives of uncles and husbands of aunts are parents in terms of mutual rights and claims. As result of the war, clans have been lacerated and displaced, and no longer living in the same place. Furthermore, people have looted and killed members of their clans or other clans in their homesteads. This crumbling of clans is affecting the traditional social network in the community, weakened the family ties and produced mutual mistrust. Further, cousins are no longer as sibling; hence, marriage between cousins, which used to be prohibited, was started by some Muslims tribes such as Otoro. This phenomenon could be as a consequence of decline of men in the community combined with interaction with societies with different culture during the displacement period.

Mutual mistrust, however, has extended to encompass interaction according to religions. Most of the people in Heiban are Christians, and few are Muslims. Before the war Muslims and Christians lived in a peaceful atmosphere even within the same household. They celebrated both religions' festivals together. All people practiced their rituals freely and securely (Rahhal 2001a; Suliman 1999b). Today, there is a silent tension between the two religious communities and the atmosphere is turbid. On one hand some young people press their Christian parents to convert and threaten them by leaving the house for good. On the other hand, some Muslims think that the Christians, through the activities of the Norwegian Church Aid Organisation in the community, work to convert the young Muslims women. This phenomenon has negative impact on the social tissue of the community and could be considered as a consequent of the war, particularly, the war has taken a religious dimension in its last years.

Another example for the effects of the war on the social network is the emergence of social classification in the community that used to live in a homogenous stratum. Before the war, there

was no social distinction between the tribes, and intermarriage between the tribes was normal (Suliman 1999b). Yet, the seedling of social classification has emerged. The tribes are socially classified in a hierarchy with Heiban tribe at the top, followed by the Lira, the Otoro, the Tira and then the Shawi. This ranking is based upon the tribes' education, etiquettes, prestige and social participation. The hierarchy, withal, indicates pre-war migration of tribes' members to urban towns who became as fallback point to their relatives during the wartime, and facilitated their engagement in education and work. The serious consequence of this classification is that it affects access to resources such as education, training and job opportunities, which might lead to establishment of this classification.

The above-mentioned changes in assets possessed and livelihoods strategies practiced by the Nuba of Heiban might lead to a considerable change in the livelihoods pathway of the community. The Nuba of Heiban as subsidy farmers invest their human capital in traditional farming to produce their food. The farmers improve their social status by investing the surplus of the farm products in livestock. Some few people entitled personal characters that enable them to engage in trading activities and move to higher social status. While few others manage to continue their education that enable them to follow professional jobs and acquire better social status. Presently, there are changes in the community livelihoods pathway. More people of both genders are engaged in trading. They have started as petty traders even before they own livestock. Furthermore, some people have expanded their production of cash crop at the expense of the staple crops. Other people managed to resume or continue their education and have been working in professional jobs. Most of the farmers, herders and traders are very keen to invest in education, which might lead to a great change in the livelihoods pathway for the next generation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The war has imposed significant costs upon the civilian population of Heiban, who are enforced either to flee their homes and community or to stay and suffer different kinds of violence, terror, raiding, rape, and looting by troops of both warring parties. Exploring the effect of the war on the livelihoods of the community has shown that on one hand the war has impoverished the already poor community. This could be indicated by destruction of the assets possessed by the people. The most serious problem incurred by the war is the destruction of the social fabric,

which indicated by the mutual mistrust, emergence of social classification as well as religious tension. It is easier to revive the tangible assets than to revive intangible assets. Therefore, mitigation of such problem requires high level of awareness about peace building and reconciliation as well as strong wiliness to mitigate the problem.

On the other hand, and in contrast, people have managed to transform some aspect of their livelihood situation for the better. That is, despite the severity of the situation, it is possible to identify some improvements in the livelihood situation of the inhabitants of Heiban town. Emergence of new gender perceptions and practices as well as attitude towards education of both girls and boys would be seen as an essential change that might lead to change in the community life style. By investing in education, households change the composition of the assets they possess, and hence the future livelihoods strategies portfolio. Furthermore, shifting to production of cash crops on the expense of the labour consuming stable crop, engagement in self-employment activities as well as change of women's social position could be considered as great economical and social progress. Therefore, I conclude that when people from a marginalized community such as Heiban, come into contact with other culture and get access to better resources become desirous for taking the opportunity for improvement of their livelihood. The gained improvement in livelihood could be withal, due to the already existing dynamics and capabilities within the society. Thereof, one could argue that war (forced migration) combined with capabilities of the society could enhance the social mobility of the community. This could be considered as unintended positive dimension of the war. Hence, the war has both impoverished and enriched the community of Heiban.

### Notes:

Byrne, B. (Dec. 1995). *Gender, conflict and development*. In Institute of Development Studies, U. o. S. (ed.). Brighton, UK, BRIDGE (development - gender). Accessed 02.04.05 on World Wide Web: <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/R34%20Gen%20Con%20Dev%20c.doc>.

Chambers, R. (1995). *Poverty and livelihoods: whose reality counts?* Brighton, Institute of Development Studies.

de Waal, A. (1995). *Facing genocide/the Nuba of Sudan*. London, African Rights.

Ellis, F. (2000). *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Faris, J. C. (1989). *Southeast Nuba social relations*. Aachen, Alano/Edition Herodot.

Goodhand, J. (2001). *Violent Conflict, Poverty and Chronic Poverty*. Oxford, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, CPRC Working Paper 6. Accessed 15.04.2004 on World Wide Web: <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/pdfs/violence.pdf>. <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/pdfs/06Goodhand.pdf>

Grootaert, C. (2003). *Measuring social capital : an integrated questionnaire*. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

Hassab-Alla, I. M. (1992). *The Social and Political History of Nuba Mountains in a Century (1885- 1985), tarykh jibal alnuba alejtima'ay wa alsisysy fy garn (1885-1985) (Arabic)*. Khartoum.

Jibear, A. E. M. (2003). *The Two Agreements of Nuba Mountains and Peace Building Support 'Ititifagiyatay jibal alnuba, wa subul da'am alsalam'*. Khartoum, National Rabat University, The High Academy of Police.

Kaffay, J. T. (1995). *The Root Causes of the Civil War in Nuba Mountains and its Consiquances 'asbab al-harb alahliya fy jibal alnuba wa aasara*ha . P. hD. Khartoum, National Rabat University, The High Academy of Police.

Kaffay, J. T. (2004). *Strategic Issues; Conflict of Nuba Mountains "gadaya estratigya, niza'a jibal alnuba"*. Khartoum.

Keen, D. (1994). *The benefits of famine : a political economy of famine and relief in southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Nadel, S. F. (1947). *The Nuba: an anthropological study of the hill tribes in Kordofan*. London, Oxford University Press.

Orient. (2005). *Encyclopaedia of the Orient; Sudan*. Accessed 01 March 2005 on World Wide Web: <http://www.lexicorient.com/e.o/index.htm>.

Rahhal, S. M. (ed.) (2001a). *The Right to be Nuba : the story of a Sudanese people's struggle for survival*. Lawrenceville, N.J., Red Sea Press.

Rahhal, S. M. (2001b). Focus on Crisis in the Nuba Mountains. In Rahhal, S. M. (ed.) *The Right to be Nuba: The Story of a Sudanese People's Struggle for Survival*. Lawrenceville.

Saeed, A. A. R. (2001). The Nuba. In Rahhal, S. M. (ed.) *The Right to be Nuba : the story of a Sudanese people's struggle for survival*. Lawrenceville, N.J., Red Sea Press.

Salih, K. e.-D. O. (1982). *The British administration in the Nuba mountains region of the Sudan 1900-1956*. London, University of London.

Suliman, M. (1999a). *Ecology, politics and violent conflict*. London, Zed Books.

Suliman, M. (1999b). *The Nuba Mountains of Sudan: Resource access, violent conflict, and Identity*. In Buckles, D. (ed.). *Cultivating Peace; Conflict and Collaboration in Natural Resource Management*. Accessed June 2004 on World Wide Web: [http://www.sudantribune.com/IMG/doc/The\\_Nuba\\_Mountains\\_of\\_Sudan.doc](http://www.sudantribune.com/IMG/doc/The_Nuba_Mountains_of_Sudan.doc).

Suliman, M. (2002a). Resource access, identity, and armed conflict in the Nuba Mountains, Southern Sudan. In Suliman, M., Baechler, G. & Spillmann, K. R. (eds.) *Transformation of resource conflicts : approach and instruments*, pp. 163 - 183. Bern, Lang.

Suliman, M., Baechler, G. & Spillmann, K. R. (eds.). (2002b). *Transformation of resource conflicts : approach and instruments*. Bern, Lang.

UNCERO. (1999). 'report of an inter-agency assessment mission to the nuba mountains of south kordofan, sudan'. Khartoum, Sudan, ReliefWeb. Accessed 10.02.2005 on World Wide Web: [http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/E078224AA67E6E9CC1256866002F6941/\\$file/Nuba+Mission+November+1999.pdf](http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/E078224AA67E6E9CC1256866002F6941/$file/Nuba+Mission+November+1999.pdf).

UNDP. (2003). *Sudan Transition And Recovery Database, Report On South Kordofan State, Nuba Mountains Region*. Accessed July, 2004 on World Wide Web: [http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/B9483199017B5C66C1256DA3004A05B9/\\$file/UNRC+Starbase+SKordofan+22Jul03.pdf](http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/B9483199017B5C66C1256DA3004A05B9/$file/UNRC+Starbase+SKordofan+22Jul03.pdf).

Verney, P. (1995). *Sudan: conflict and minorities*. London, Minority Rights Group.

Wood, R. G. (1971). *Agricultural systems in the Nuba mountains, Sudan*. Los Angeles, University of California.