
Women Farmers and Food Sovereignty in a No War/ No Peace Situation: Case of Sudan's South Kordofan

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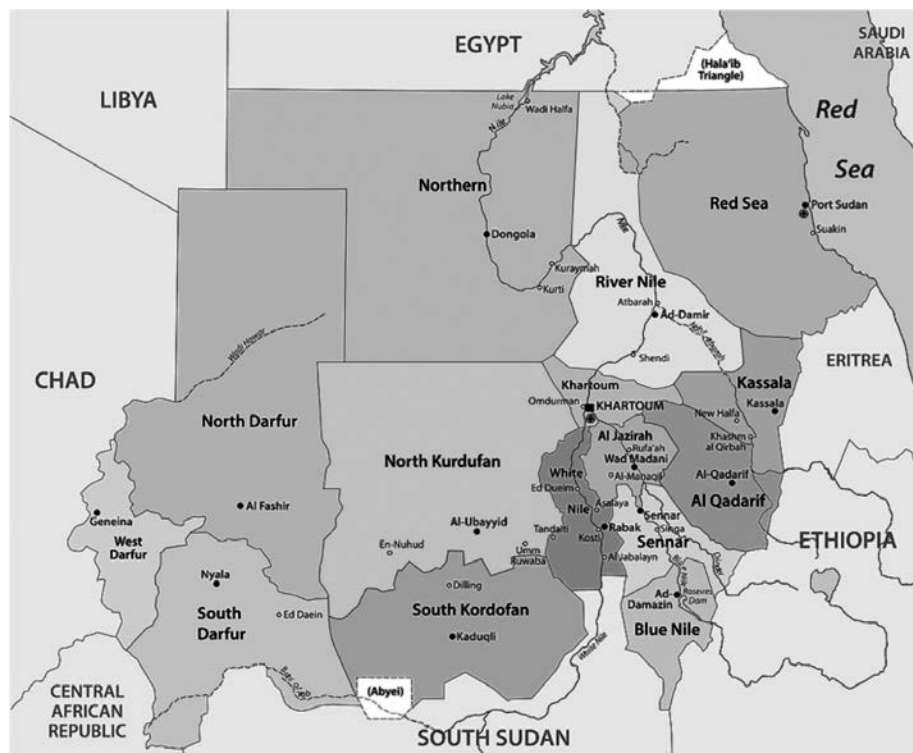
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Based on field research in Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)-controlled areas of South Kordofan in April and May of 2021, this paper documents and analyzes the experiences of women farmers in South Kordofan. We focus on women's roles in ensuring food sovereignty at community level. The state of South Kordofan is a war-affected area of Sudan that is in a state of no war/no peace. This situation is "characterized by continued insecurity, low-level violence, inter-group hostility, and persistence of the factors that sparked and sustained the conflict."¹ Communities in South Kordofan have endured and resisted decades of socio-economic, political and cultural marginalization at the hands of successive governments in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. Women farmers, community members, and officials in South Kordofan interviewed for this research perceive women's roles in subsistence farming as essential for ensuring dignity, freedom, survival, and life. This is particularly important because during the rule of Omer Bashir (1989-2019), the government used food as a weapon of war, to subjugate South Kordofan's indigenous Nuba communities. Through these preliminary thoughts, we aim to contribute to restoring the voices of women farmers into academia as legitimate producers of knowledge. We argue that the experiences, narratives, and knowledge of women farmers in South Kordofan can enrich current thinking around food sovereignty, especial

Fig. 1. States of Sudan Map²



INTRODUCTION

“We cultivate food in Jabarik.³ We grow broad beans, sorghum, okra, tomatoes, and more. We start by clearing the area. We make sure animals are locked up...Insects and pests affect farming, but we use ashes to control them. When we harvest what we cultivated, we become self-sufficient. We also make dried tomatoes, pumpkins, eggplant, and zucchini and use it during the dry season.” – FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION, NUBA MOUNTAINS, BY NAGLAA ABDULWAHID, APRIL 9, 2021

“Women play important roles. They are the backbone of this community.” – INTERVIEW WITH SALIH EL-BADEL, GOVERNOR OF THE NUBA MOUNTAINS, SOUTH KORDOFAN, BY NAGLAA ABDULWAHID, APRIL 9, 2021

Food and the lack thereof are major global concerns, especially among historically marginalized communities in war-affected areas such as South Kordofan. One of Sudan's 18 states, South Kordofan is home to three major ethnic groups: the Nuba, the Misseriya, and the Hawazma. The Nuba, an indigenous community that identifies as African, consists of over 50 tribes. These groups speak over 40 languages. They also adhere to different religions. Farming is the main livelihood in the area, but the Nuba and other communities in the area also herd cattle and keep other domestic animals.⁴ Women play key roles in subsistence farming. Communities and political activists in the area see this role as key to the community's very survival, and to its dignity and freedom, given that communities in South Kordofan have endured and resisted decades of socio-economic, political and cultural marginalization at the hands of successive governments. The area has witnessed conflict and militarization since the early 1989s. Over the years, successive governments in Sudan have used food as a weapon in their wars with the Nuba.

It is thus important to document and analyze the experiences of women farmers and their contributions to food sovereignty in the area. We focus on areas under the control of the Sudan People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N).⁵ We argue that women's contributions to agricultural production have particular significance, because their labor and its products are connected to attempts to ensure food sovereignty in an area that has been in a no-war/no-peace state: a situation “characterized by continued insecurity, low-level violence, inter-group hostility, and persistence of the factors that sparked and sustained the conflict,” though not “large-scale” enough to rise to a clear definition of all-out war.⁶ Through these preliminary insights, we also aim to contribute to restoring

the voices of women farmers into academia as legitimate producers of knowledge.⁷

In documenting the experiences of women farmers, we engage with the concept of food sovereignty as it relates to a protracted conflict in the area. The concept of food sovereignty, as opposed to food security, highlights structural inequalities, is explicitly normative, and it reflects farmers' agency and voice.⁸ It aligns with current thinking on climate justice, intersectionality, and the need to transform unequal power relations. Movements concerned with food sovereignty introduced this concept to replace the widely used notion of food security. The latter, which international agencies such as the World Food Programme continue to use, "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."⁹

Alternatively, the concept of food sovereignty is rooted in movement activism in the global South. The agrarian movement, *La Via Campesina*, coined the concept in 1996. This movement worked collectively with other farmer organizations and movements for over a decade to refine the initial definition of food sovereignty. This process culminated in a conference in Nyéléni, Mali. The declaration from this conference defined food sovereignty as

"[T]he right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. [This concept] puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime... Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture...It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those... who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations."¹⁰

Researching the politics of food and food sovereignty in Sudan is crucial, given the prevalence of food shortages and crises in different parts of the country, and especially in non-government held areas in South Kordofan. As discussed above, women farmers and political activists alike define subsistence farming as a political strategy for survival, dignity, and

freedom. That is, they articulate an understanding of subsistence farming as food sovereignty.

This article is based on fieldwork that Naglaa Abdulwahid conducted in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan, in April and May 2021. Naglaa, a gender advisor and a political activist in South Kordofan and a farmer, carried out interviews with women farmers, with the governor of the region, and with officials in the Directorate of Agriculture. She also met with heads of civil society groups, including women's organizations and producer cooperatives. Naglaa also organized Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which often took place in the form of conversations during *Jabana* (coffee) gatherings.¹¹ Nada, a scholar activist who is based in North America, was the principal investigator in the larger project on which this article is based. She conceptualized the research in consultation with researchers, provided training, and co-authored this paper with Naglaa.

The next section of this paper elaborates on the conflict in South Kordofan and on Sudan's food crises. We then share narratives of women farmers and discuss their potential contributions to advancing food sovereignty in South Kordofan.

CONTEXT

*Sudan's Food Crises*¹²

Sudan is one of many countries in which the population faces serious food shortages and increases in the price of food. According to the WFP, 15 million people (that is, 34% of the country's population of 46.7 million) were "food insecure" in May 2022, up from 10.9 million in January 2022.¹³ Moreover, 14.4 million people (a third of the country's population) needed humanitarian assistance during the same month, with 59 percent of this assisted population living in areas affected by conflict.¹⁴ As of May 2022, prices of food continued to rise in the country. The WFP estimates that the average cost of a food basket increased by 18.64% from March to April 2022. Sudan's history of colonialism, and contemporary national, regional, and global economic and political structures and processes have contributed to on-going food crises—in a country so rich with fertile land that it was considered a potential food basket for the Arab world in the 1970s.¹⁵ It was during the 1970s that investors from food insecure countries in the Middle East and North Africa region started to purchase or lease "vast swaths of fertile land irrigated by the Nile River to grow food crops to sustain their populations."¹⁶ These "land grabs" have harmed local commu-

nities that relied on the land through using large lands and water resources without accounting for these communities.¹⁷

Current contributing factors to Sudan's food crises include an "economic fallout, poor harvest, political instability, increases in food costs, and the impact of the Ukraine crisis," which led to "a sharp increase in global food prices and transportation costs as a result of trade flow interruptions." These combine with "the depreciation of the Sudanese Pound (SDG)."¹⁸ Food insecurity and hunger affect communities in distinct ways based on gender, race and ethnicity, social class, refugee status, regional location, and other aspects of difference, and communities in Sudan are no exception.

Conflict in South Kordofan: The Impact on Women

The people of Sudan have endured conflicts since the 1950s, when war broke out in now independent South Sudan, a year before Sudan's political independence. It was in the 1980s that war started in the Nuba Mountains. Marginalization and conflict have affected Nuba communities, particularly women. The lack of education and health infrastructure meant limited access to education and healthcare for women. Women also experienced sexual violence and exploitation at the hands of the government's army in the 1980s and 1990s. As the director of the office of the late Yusuf Kuwa, Commissioner of the then SPLM-held Nuba Mountains, put it in the late 1990s,

"Women in the Nuba Mountains are directly affected by war. They die while giving birth [due to lack of health infrastructure]...In the Nuba Mountains, the government army kidnaps women, men, and children. Women and children are kept in so called peace villages. Young women are then used for the nights. Each soldier takes the girl that he fancies and goes away with her. Elderly women are sent to fetch water and firewood...These are the kinds of problems that women in the Nuba Mountains emphasize."¹⁹

After a period of relative peace between 2005 and 2011, war re-erupted. Immediate causes of this war include disputes between SPLM-North and the former government of Sudan over several issues. First, the 2005 peace agreement between the SPLM and the former government of Sudan in mandated popular consultations in South Kordofan, in recognition of the exclusion of the voices of people from the areas during the peace process, which culminated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).²⁰ Popular consultations would have enabled communities in South

Kordofan to decide on the kind of state-level governmental, economic, and cultural policies they wanted in their area. Theoretically, this may have prevented the re-eruption of conflict in 2011, as South Sudan was preparing for independence. Second was the former Sudanese government's plan to dissolve the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the military wing of SPLM-N, and to integrate it into Sudan's army without resolving underlying political factors that had caused the conflict. Third, the same government rigged elections in South Kordofan in 2010. Taken together, these issues were the result of the liberal peace process that culminated in the signing of the CPA.²¹

Although a popular uprising in 2018-2019 ended thirty years of dictatorial rule, parts of South Kordofan remained in a precarious state of no-war/no-peace. SPLM-N did not join the political forces that formed the Transitional Government. Instead, it participated in peace negotiations with the transitional government. The movement declared a unilateral ceasefire after the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir's regime. It has extended the ceasefire several times, until October 2021, when the military faction of the transitional government staged a coup. This has contributed to increased instability in South Kordofan. Nevertheless, communities, especially women, continue to cultivate food, which has enabled the SPLM-N to sustain its position on contentious issues, such as the relationship between religion and state and security arrangements.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: ON FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Where do the concepts of "food security" and "food sovereignty" overlap? Where do they diverge? And why is the latter more relevant to the experiences of women farmers in South Kordofan? As discussed earlier, the 1995 *Rome Declaration on World Food Security*, which world governments adopted at the United Nation's World Food Summit, defines food security as a state where "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."²² In the same declaration, governments committed to ensuring an "enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and equal participation of women and men, which is most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all."²³

Unlike food security, which is considered a responsibility of states and governments, food sovereignty (which we define above) entails commu-

nity-set agrarian policies. As Raj Patel puts it, “the definition of food security avoided discussing the social control of the food system. *As far as the terms of food security go, it is entirely possible for people to be food secure in prison or under a dictatorship.*”²⁴ Food sovereignty, on the other hand, “has its own geographies...determined by specific histories and contours of resistance.” Patel further argues that “[t]o demand a space of food sovereignty is to demand specific arrangements to govern territory and space.”²⁵ South Kordofan is a good setting to explore the relevance of this concept and its gender dimensions because not only have successive governments in Sudan abandoned their responsibility to ensuring food security, they have also physically isolated the area. As discussed earlier, they have also used food as a political weapon by preventing communities’ access to food by way of humanitarian assistance.²⁶ This situation has necessitated reliance on community-set agrarian policies and practices in which women play a key role.

Gender, the social and cultural construction of differences between the sexes, has been front and center in food sovereignty thinking. However, some critics of the concept of food sovereignty, including Bina Agrawal, have pointed to potential contradictions “between the key features of the food sovereignty vision.” These include contradictions “between promoting food crops and a farmer’s freedom to choose to what extent to farm, which crops to grow, and how to grow them; between strengthening family farming and achieving gender equality; and between collective and individual rights, especially over land ownership.”²⁷

Agrawal has pointed to ways of achieving food sovereignty goals through institutional change “without sacrificing an individual’s freedom to choose.”²⁸ Agrawal draws on research she conducted in Andhra Pradesh, in India, and on comparative analysis. She argues that “individual rights can live comfortably with collective approaches through a voluntary pooling of resources without forfeiting land ownership.”²⁹ She also suggests supporting women farmers who often lack sufficient resources or access to equipment. The latter is relevant to South Kordofan, as none of the women’s organizations owns equipment that is necessary for farming, such as tractors, grain drills, or harvesters.

Gender equality is considered a pre-condition for achieving food sovereignty, given that many indigenous communities consider women custodians of the land, and given that women are often involved in subsistence farming in significant ways.³⁰ In South Kordofan, there is increased commitment to gender equality at all levels, at least at the level of discourse. Women across South Kordofan, especially the Nuba, are known for their

contributions to the economy and society during peace and war. They are mostly farmers, as seasonal rain-irrigated agriculture is the main livelihood activity in the area. The rainy season continues over six months of the year and often yields good produce for farmers, but in recent years, production has diminished because of insufficient rain. The high cost of farming inputs constitutes another hurdle to food farming in the region.

Despite these challenges, communities in the region continue to farm and to produce food for survival, rather than for accumulation and profit. "Activities, the central principle of which is to care for the base," drive farming practice in the area.³¹ Importantly, this subsistence economy embodies resistance to marginalization and to the use of access to food and humanitarian assistance as a political weapon of war, especially during the NCP regime.

During our research, women in the area reported limited availability of commodities in the local market prior to the overthrow of Bashir's government. After the uprising, markets flourished on the borders with government-held areas, affecting local access to food in the area. Communities sold their produce—including baobab, tamarind, broad beans, sesame, and sorghum—in return for sugar and tea. Conversely, this exchange created food scarcity because it deprived communities of local agricultural produce.

Interviewees did not specifically use the term food sovereignty. Yet, several officials interviewed for this research connected agriculture, food production, and food security to dignity, life, and freedom for the people of South Kordofan; thus, they articulated an understanding of food sovereignty. The head of the agricultural directorate in South Kordofan, Hafsa al-Marin, said, "We exerted a lot of effort to ensure there is enough food and nutrition. This is important for our very existence because food is connected to life and freedom. Without it, we become vulnerable to exploitation. That is why we seek self-sufficiency."³² This official acknowledged the important role that farmers, especially women farmers, play for the community to survive and thrive.

Women face a challenge in the duality of maintaining their key role as farmers while also shouldering household care responsibilities, such as cooking and caring for children. Luckily, the administration of the area works to ensure women's participation in politics and in all sectors of the economy. Women representatives are organized in a women's union, through which they articulate their demands and work toward achieving gender equality.

The narratives of several women farmers point to the connections

between cultivating food and addressing the impacts of war. One FGD participant stated,

“The impact of war has been devastating. We were separated from other people. We lost relatives and some people were injured. During the war, we learned how to hide and how to protect and care for children. We work hard to make sure we have enough food. For us, food is connected to life and to freedom.”³³

Food sovereignty, as an ideology and a practice, is connected to struggles to decolonize, including decolonizing of land, something that the Nuba have sought for decades, given long disputes between communities in the area over grazing lands. The governor of South Kordofan said, “There is no stability or security; the former regime has colonized our land. Air bombardment under the previous regime affected citizens’ security. It also affected access to education and health,” given that the former regime targeted schools and hospitals. Local organizations, such as the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization (NRRDO), provide limited services in the areas of education, health, and awareness-raising.

SPLM-N regulates the agricultural sector through the Directorate of Agriculture and Food Security, which works closely with NRRDO and with mixed-gender farmers’ cooperatives in the area. This directorate oversees different sectors, including agricultural engineering, protection (from pests and other dangers), guidance to support farmers, and research and planning.

Figure 2. Women of South Kordofan



Left: FGD, Kauda, April 2021. Photo by Naglaa Abdulwahid.

Right: “Rights are not given but taken.” Women farmer in Kauda, April 2021. Photo by Naglaa Abdulwahid.

The isolation of communities in South Kordofan has shielded them from grand public and private schemes that seek “the intensification and commercialization of poor people’s crops.”³⁴ These include productivist approaches that promote “smallholder access to newly structured agricultural value chains”³⁵ that have proved ineffective elsewhere in Africa, such as in Mozambique³⁶ and Tanzania.³⁷ This isolation has also shielded communities from exploitation that farm laborers experience in large cities, such as Khartoum. In that respect, the conditions under which communities in South Kordofan cultivate and consume food are drastically different from the experiences of women farm laborers displaced from South Kordofan and Darfur who work in the outskirts of Khartoum. These women in Khartoum become a “surplus population” that is not absorbed by “a blooming urban economy,”³⁸ but are further marginalized in the peri-urban agricultural economy. We discuss the experiences of these women briefly here.

A member of the wider research team interviewed women who live in a remote area to the north of Khartoum and who work as agricultural laborers on farms outside the city. These women often clean lands prior to cultivation and take part in harvesting the produce. As wage laborers, these women work without contracts, social insurance, or health benefits.³⁹ Women gather before sunrise each day and wait for recruiters to arrive. Through this precarious employment, women earn 500 Sudanese Pounds (SDG) per day (slightly over one U.S. dollar at the time of research). Landlords do not bear responsibility if a laborer became sick or was injured at work. They also experience harassment and sexual violence. Acutely aware of this precarity and insecurity, women told the wider research team in a focus group discussion “it is not very safe for us, if one needed to pee, she will ask her friends to go with her.”⁴⁰ They face harassment from landlords, but they cannot speak out about or against: “The landlord can touch you, but you cannot say anything. Otherwise, he will not allow women to work.”⁴¹ Women are forced to keep silent about the conditions they face, in fear of losing their only source of income, yet these meager wages do not even cover their and their families’ basic needs for education or healthcare. The area where they live lacks basic social services and infrastructure. This includes a lack of access to safe sources of water. Communities (mainly women) fetch water from a well using an electric pump.

The story of one of the women that the research team interviewed illustrates the experiences of many others. Nasra,⁴² who is in her fifties, insisted that one of the researchers feels her hands before the interview. She said, “these are not a woman’s hands. [My hands] are ruined because

of farming.”⁴³ Her hands were rough and had small cuts. Nasra told interviewees,

“I came from Darfur seventeen years ago, my husband left me with seven children, and I do not know anything about him [now]. Children need food and clothes. I have been sick for more than three years now, but I cannot afford to see a doctor. I wake up before sunrise and I go immediately to wait for the cars [agents who recruit daily wage farm laborers] to come. If I were late, they would leave without me. We sit on the floor. Many women, when a car approaches, we all rush to it so we could get a spot. [We board the car] and then we work from sunrise until sunset for little money. I tried to find other work. I used to make and sell hats in the market, but this did not [guarantee] money every day, so I went back to the farms. Landlords do not care about us. They only want us to work. They do not care if we are injured or sick. We do not even have breaks for prayers. Sometimes we must walk back home, and this is a long distance to walk. Then the next morning we go back to the farms.”⁴⁴

Nasra told the researchers that despite precarity and exploitation, a woman farmer cannot afford to miss a day of work, so as not to lose her spot to another woman.

Narratives of women farmers in South Kordofan, and of women day laborers in greater Khartoum shed light on several issues that require attention from policy makers and solidarity from activists and movements. Addressing these wider factors while also integrating food sovereignty into the policies and practices of the SPLM-N will help sustain communities in the long-run.

CONCLUSION

War-affected areas, including where a no-war/no-peace situation prevails, are often arenas of precarity, insecurity, and militarization. However, non-government-held areas in South Kordofan enjoy a relative autonomy that allows a rethinking of gender relations and ideas about food. Heorizing of food sovereignty in North and South America connects the concept to decoloniality and decolonization. Raj Patel and Sam Grey, for example, have argued that the concept of food security “is centrally, though not exclusively, about groups of people making their own decisions about the food system—it is a way of talking about a theoretically-informed food systems practice...It is a continuation of anti-colonial struggles, even in post-colonial contexts.”⁴⁵

In South Kordofan, integrating a vision that centers food sovereignty

and a desire to achieve it would transform the nature of SPLM-N politics. This will open up opportunities for building solidarity and connecting with farmers' struggles in Sudan and elsewhere. Elsewhere in Sudan, farmers' struggles against land grabbing would benefit from a politics of food sovereignty. Other Global South settings provide examples of this: in India, the Via Campesina movement united with farmers' protests to secure legal reform and the repeal of three farm laws that undermined farmers' rights.⁴⁶ Envisioning narratives about farming, food sufficiency, and food sovereignty as discourses of resistance also opens the door to "new practices of vision and knowledge" that render women's contributions important both conceptually and in practice.⁴⁷ Such resistance would redefine farming as a political, decolonial act that is central to achieving dignity, freedom, and justice in the long run. Slogans of dignity, freedom, and justice resemble the slogans of Sudan's 2018/2019 uprising. The politics of food sovereignty should complement these slogans. A commitment to addressing the needs and interests of women, including women farmers, should be central to such politics. *f*

ENDNOTES

- 1 Tommy Andersson and Conan Mukherjee, *Seeking No War, Achieving No Peace*, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, working paper, February 2019, 1, https://econ-papers.repec.org/article/tafdefpea/v_3a32_3ay_3a2021_3ai_3a3_3ap_3a253-270.htm; See also Roger Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why so many peace processes fail to deliver peace," *International Politics* 47 (2) (2010): 145–162, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42801029_No_War_No_Peace_Why_So_Many_Peace_Processes_Fail_to_Deliver_Peace.
- 2 *Courtesy of WorldAtlas*, <https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/sudan>.
- 3 Plural of Jubraka, meaning small farms near homes.
- 4 Herding is the main livelihood source for the Miseriya and Hawazma peoples.
- 5 SPLM-North broke off from SPLM—a movement which was formed in 1983 by the late John Garang with the aim of achieving a "New Sudan" built on equality and a redistribution of political power and economic resources after the secession of South Sudan.
- 6 Andersson and Mukherjee, *Seeking No War, Achieving No Peace*, 1; See also Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace," 2010, 145-162.
- 7 This is one group of women whose voices and roles are often absent in academic discourse. The voices of street vendors, low income and working-class women, among others, are also often excluded.
- 8 Jur Schuurman, "La Via Campesina at the Crossroads," *Development in Practice* 5 (2) (1995): 149-54. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4028934>.
- 9 *Rome Declaration and Plan of Action on World Food Security*, World Food Summit, Rome, November 13-17, 1996, <https://www.fao.org/3/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>.
- 10 *Declaration of Nyéléni*, The Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007, <https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>.
- 11 Naglaa participated in a four-week virtual training on qualitative research methods,

feminist research, and research and professional ethics, along with three other researchers and two research assistants who participated in a wider study, which includes the research on which this article is based. The principal investigator in the wider study, Nada Mustafa Ali, delivered the training. The researcher followed all ethics requirements. She obtained informed, verbal consent from participants prior to interviews and FGDs. She also ensured privacy during interviews where needed. Given that this research took place in Spring 2021, the researcher took all precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Participants in interviews and focus group discussions each received a face mask and sanitizer. The researcher delivered short COVID-awareness sessions prior to interviews and FGDs. Participants in this research, which the authors consider co-producers of knowledge, did not receive financial compensation, so participants did not feel that they were under any pressure to participate in this study.

- 12 A discussion of how structural inequalities, marginalization on the bases of gender, race and ethnicity, social class, and other aspects of difference, conflicts, food insecurity, and the lack thereof in Sudan reinforce one another is beyond this article. For a discussion of the 1984-5 famine that devastated Darfur that privileges perspectives of local farmers, and that highlights survival strategies of the local population see Alex de Waal, *Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For an account on the state and agriculture in Sudan see Taisir Ali, *The Cultivation of Hunger: State and Agriculture in the Sudan* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1989). For a comprehensive discussion of the history of marginalization in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan State, see Samuel Totten and Amanda f. Grzyb, eds., *Conflict in the Nuba Mountains: From Genocide by Attrition to the Contemporary Crisis in Sudan* (New York: Routledge, 2015). See also Claudio Gramizzi and Jérôme Tubiana, *New War, Old Enemies: Conflict Dynamics in South Kordofan, Working Paper of the Small Arms Survey*, April 2013, <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/new-war-old-enemies-conflict-dynamics-south-kordofan-hsba-working-paper-29>; and Omer Mustafa Shurkian, *On Sudan's Conflict: Pitfalls and Fates of Blue Nile and South Kordofan Protocols* (London: MBG Press, 2011). For a discussion of marginalization in Sudan, including in the Nuba Mountains, from a gender and an intersectional perspective, see Nada M. Ali, *Gender, Race and Sudan's Exile Politics: Do we all belong to this Country?* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015).
- 13 According to the January 2022 WFP country brief, about one million of those who lacked food security were refugees; World Food Program (WFP), *Sudan Country Brief: May 2022*, 1, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140767/download/?_ga=2.83291734.138611400.1656511789-838297271.1656511789.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 This was during a time when ideas of Arab nationalism shaped the strategies of the military regime in power.
- 16 Fredrick Mugira and Annika McGinnis (with Stefano Turrini), "Land Grabbing and its Implications for Sudanese: Views from a Scholar," *Water Journalists Africa*, May 13, 2019, <https://waterjournalistsafrica.com/2019/05/land-grabbing-and-its-implications-for-sudanese-views-from-a-scholar/>.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 WFP, *Sudan Country Brief: May 2022*, 1.
- 19 Interview with Walid Hamid for doctoral research by Nada Mustafa Ali, Nairobi, March 1999. See Ali, 2015, 116.
- 20 The late John Garang founded SPLM/A in 1983, with the aim of ending social, economic, and political marginalization in Sudan, and achieving a united New Sudan

where communities would enjoy equitable access to political and economic power. Communities in the Nuba Mountains (South Kordofan) and in the Blue Nile areas of Sudan were part of SPLM's key constituencies. After the secession of South Sudan in 2011, following a South Sudan Referendum which the CPA mandated, the SPLM became the ruling party in South Sudan. Northern Sudanese members, including the majority Nuba and Blue Nile communities continued to operate in Sudan as Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North.

- 21 See Sarah Nouwen, Laura James, and Sharath Srinivasan (eds.), *Making and Breaking Peace in Sudan and South Sudan: The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/making-and-breaking-peace-in-sudan-and-south-sudan-9780197266953?cc=us&lang=en&>.
- 22 *Rome Declaration*, 1996; See also FAO, "An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security," EC-FAO Food Security Programme, 2008, <https://www.fao.org/3/al936e/al936e.pdf>.
- 23 *Rome Declaration*, 1996.
- 24 Italics our own; Raj Patel, "Food Sovereignty," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 (3) (2009): 665, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03066150903143079>.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 663-706.
- 26 The authors note the pitfalls of humanitarian assistance. An elaborate discussion of this issue is crucial, especially in relation to food sovereignty, but such analysis is beyond this paper.
- 27 Bina Agarwal, "Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Democratic Choice: Critical Contradictions, Difficult Conciliations," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41 (6) (2014): 1247, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2013.876996>.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.*, 1256.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 669.
- 31 Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2011), 168, <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691150451/encountering-development>.
- 32 Interview with Director of Agriculture, Hafsa Al-Marin, by Naglaa Abdulwahid, April 10, 2021.
- 33 FGD in Kauda, South Kordofan, by Naglaa Abdulwahid, April 11, 2021.
- 34 Thomas Bassett and William Munro, "Guest Editors' Introduction: Lost in Translation: Pro-Poor Development in the Green Revolution in Africa," *African Studies Review* 65 (1) (2022): 8-15, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/853766/pdf>.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 36 Heidi Gengenbach, Alcino A. Come, and Justino B. Nhabinde, "Serving 'the Uses of Life': Gender, History, and Food Security in A Cassava Value Chain Scheme," *African Studies Review* 65 (1) (March 2022): 93-117, <https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/47757>.
- 37 Beth Ann Williams, "'Bananas are for Women, Coffee is for Men': Gendered Narratives of Agricultural Histories on Mount Meru, Tanzania," *African Studies Review* 65 (1) (2022): 143-165, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/853770/summary>.
- 38 Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 157.
- 39 This section is based on discussions between Nada Mustafa Ali and Niemat Abdulshafi, Khartoum North, 2014, and on interviews by members of a wider research team (for Ali et. al., forthcoming) in Khartoum North, in April 2021. Names of interviewees withheld.
- 40 Interview with a woman agricultural laborer April 2021; *Cited in* Ali et. al., (forth-

- coming), "Gender and Sudan's 2018/2019 Uprising: Experiences of Self-Employed Women Sellers of Food and Beverages in Khartoum and Port-Sudan, and Women Farmers in South Kordofan." Name of interviewee withheld.
- 41 Interview with a woman agricultural laborer in April 2021; *Cited in* Ali et. al., (forthcoming). Name of interviewee withheld.
- 42 Name has been changed to preserve anonymity.
- 43 Interview by the author in Khartoum North, April 2021.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Sam Grey and Raj Patel, "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics," *Agriculture and Human Values* 32 (3) (2014): 431, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/S10460-014-9548-9>.
- 46 Amarjot Kaur, "Farmers Victorious: Gurburb Cheer for Farm Activists Across Tricity," *The Tribune*, November 19, 2021, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/chandigarh/farmers-victorious-gurburb-cheer-for-farm-activists-across-tricity-340453>.
- 47 Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 155.