

# COVID-19 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MIGRANT, IDP AND RETURNEE COMMUNITIES IN SUDAN

PILOT STUDY IN SELECTED LOCALITIES ACROSS WEST DARFUR

DATA COLLECTED IN DECEMBER 2020

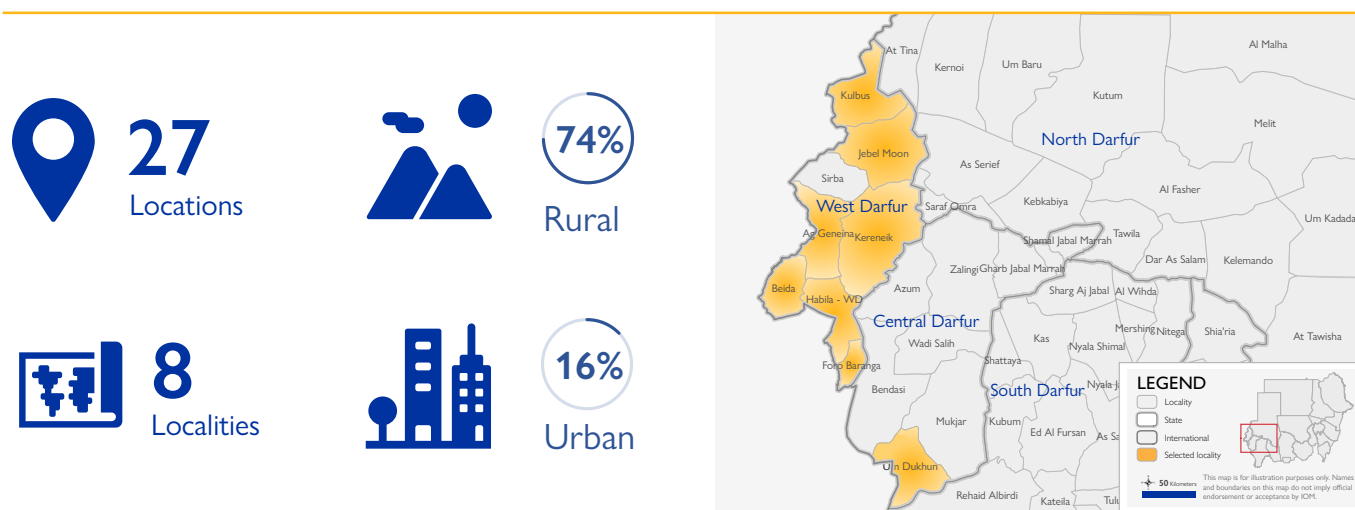


In March 2020, the Government of Sudan declared a nationwide public health emergency to curb the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Mitigation measures were promptly introduced, such as restrictions to travel due to closure of airports, points of entry (PoE) along land borders and maritime boundaries, as well as domestic movement restrictions. DTM began collecting and compiling information on these measures and monitoring their subsequent impact on internally displaced person (IDP) populations, including impediments to camp access and stranded IDPs. [The 19th \(and final\) Mobility Restrictions Dashboard](#) was published on 24 September 2020 and consolidated the latest data on measures taken by the Government of Sudan to curb the first wave of the pandemic.

According to the most recent figures from the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 7 March 2021, there are 30,540 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,895 related-deaths in Sudan.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the devastating and direct effect of this death toll, the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations across the country, as they attempted to overcome the induced mobility restrictions, crippled economy and high-levels of resulting unemployment.

As part of a larger Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regional study, DTM Sudan interviewed 27 key informants across eight localities in West Darfur to pilot data collection on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on mobile populations since the lifting of mobility restriction measures. The mobile populations targeted include migrant (foreign national), IDP and returnee communities who rely on mobility to maintain their livelihoods. Data collection was conducted in December 2020 through direct interviews with key informants (89% male and 11% female), comprising community representatives, local authorities and religious leaders.

As an initial analysis, this report serves to depict at the locality-level the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mobile populations through six main pillars, namely, (1) protecting health services and systems during the crisis (2) social protection and access to basic services (3) economic response and recovery (4) macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration (5) social cohesion and community resilience and (6) mobility. Drawing on lessons learned from this pilot study, DTM will expand its data collection to cover additional states across the country in 2021.



Map 1 Localities where data collection on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 was piloted

<sup>1</sup>For more information, please see: <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/sd>

In addition to seven of the eight localities assessed in West Darfur, DTM collected data from Um Dukhun locality in Central Darfur.

## PILLAR ONE



# PROTECTING HEALTH SERVICES AND SYSTEMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Out of the 27 key informants interviewed, 78 per cent report available and functional health facilities in their respective locality, all of which (100%) are open and operational for non-COVID-19 related medical services. Fifteen per cent of these have reached maximum capacity and 44 per cent are operating at higher capacity than usual.

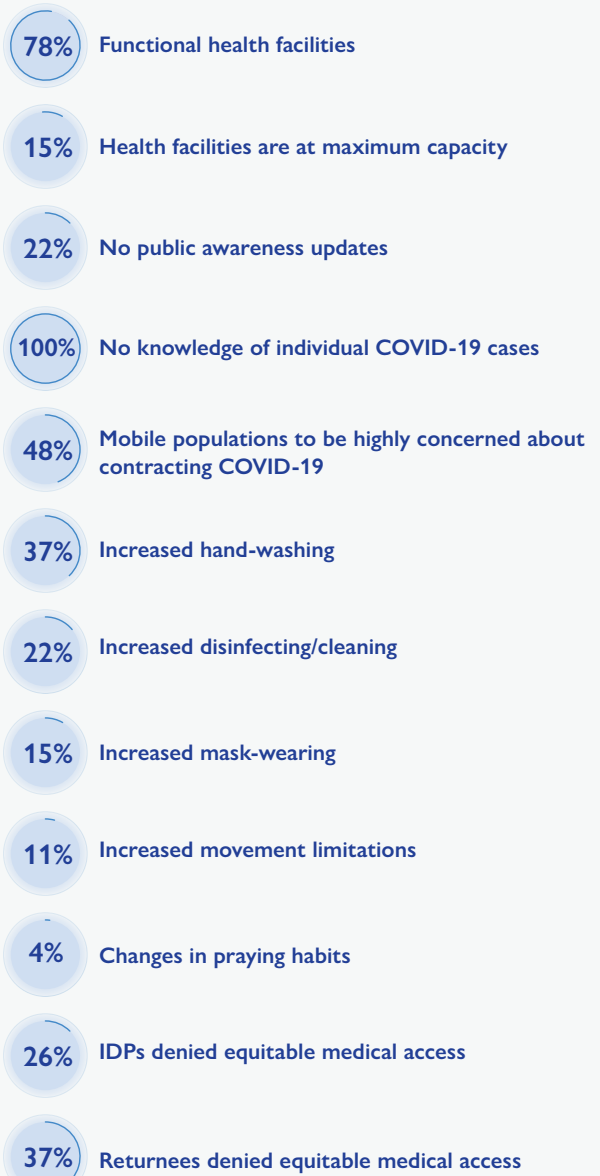
The majority (100%) of mobile populations are reportedly aware of the COVID-19 pandemic, having received information predominantly from medical personal and/or international organisations (including both the United Nations and local non-governmental organisations). One key informant in Kulbus locality, however, reports mobile populations received information on the pandemic solely through social media. Ninety-three per cent of key informants indicate that additional information had been disseminated in their locality through public posters and banners (although 22% of respondents indicate this material has not been updated in the reporting month).

Despite a general awareness of the pandemic, all key informants (100%) report minimal/no knowledge of persons in contact with or infected with the virus – a clear gap in contact-tracing and testing capacity within these localities. Furthermore, 48 per cent report mobile populations to be highly concerned about themselves or their households contracting COVID-19, with 30 per cent slightly concerned. This has resulted in 37 per cent of respondents observing an increase in hand-washing, 22 per cent an increase in disinfecting and cleaning, 15 per cent an increase in wearing masks and 11 per cent an increase in limitation of movements. Praying habits, however, have barely changed (4% of respondents) nor has work decreased (7% of respondents).

Despite COVID-19 indiscriminately affecting entire populations, 74 per cent of key informants report legal access for displaced individuals to available healthcare facilities and/or medical treatment in the case of contracting the virus. Key informants from the rural Beida, Habila and Kulbus localities (26%) emphasise inequitable medical access for IDPs – 37 per cent emphasise inequitable medical access for returnees.

Through the support of international organisations (predominantly) as well as government and local authorities, 52 per cent of respondents indicate targeted medical care to now be provided for COVID-19 patients within displaced communities in their respective locality.

Percentage of key informants who report:



## PILLAR TWO



## SOCIAL PROTECTION AND BASIC SERVICES

Out of the 27 key informants interviewed, 63 per cent report schools and other educational institutions in their respective locality to have remained open despite the pandemic. Eighty per cent of those that are closed are reportedly due to mitigation measures against COVID-19. Thirty-three per cent of key informants indicate that mobile populations already face discriminate challenges in accessing school – with access being made even more challenging by COVID-19.

Within communities already struggling with access to basic services, just over half of key informants report their locality to have available water supplies (56%), merely one-third to have available electricity (33%), and less than one-third to have available sanitation services (30%) – all these basic services are essential in communities' ability to curb the spread of the virus.

Pharmacies are open within all localities (100%), but 44 per cent of key informants report them to be operating at reduced hours. Supermarkets and grocery stores are also operating at reduced hours and four per cent have been forced to close temporarily (only 60% of respondents indicate the existence of supermarkets and grocery stores prior to the pandemic). Similarly, outdoor food markets are operating at reduced hours with 74 per cent of key informants reporting them available in their locality. Thirty-seven per cent report available banks and financial services in their locality (also operating at reduced hours). All government services remain open, the majority now operating at reduced hours (according to 59% of key informants).

It was noted that there is an acute shortage of medicines across all localities, indicated by 96 per cent of key informants interviewed. Additionally, all localities (100%) have a shortage in essential food items and 56 per cent have a shortage in non-food items. Mobile populations, according to more than half of the key informants (56%), are facing moderate to severe food insecurity, coupled with 78 per cent of their communities situated below the poverty line – a critical humanitarian situation. Key informants attribute the worsening of the economy as a possible result of the restrictions implemented to mitigate the pandemic.

National and international aid agencies and local governments have responded to the crisis through the distribution of food (indicated by 44% of key informants), food for work (indicated by 15%) and cash for work (indicated by 7%). Thirty-three per cent of key informants, however, stipulate that their respective locality has received no humanitarian aid at all. Displaced populations are reported to be most in need and, of those who have received support, only 58 per cent of respondents deem the support to be enough to meet needs.

Percentage of key informants who report:



## PILLAR THREE

III



### ECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Out of the 27 key informants interviewed, 81 per cent report a high unemployment rate (more than 60% of the population) to have been present in their locality prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, 89 per cent of respondents identify this high unemployment rate. Most mobile populations (100%) are reliant on daily-paid work, many working in agriculture, construction, selling handicrafts and tea in the markets – all sectors impacted by movement restrictions and the economic deterioration. Concern regarding the unpredictability of the situation was also raised by key informants as impacting the livelihoods of these communities. For those employed, 63 per cent of respondents indicate commuting to work has now resumed.

Many key informants report businesses in these localities to be small (78%), managed by males (93%) primarily under the age of 32 (59%). According to at least 56 per cent of key informants, local businesses are owned by mobile populations. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many local businesses (indicated by 16% of key informants) being temporarily shut down, logistical services being reduced (indicated by 11%), high number of employee absences due to sickness or fear of sickness (indicated by 26%) and large volumes of raw materials and stock expiring before sale (indicated by 11%). Consequently, 70 per cent of key informants report local businesses to be struggling to meet their financial commitments, with 59 per cent reporting them likely to close.

These challenges disproportionately affect mobile populations, who face additional legal limitations in accessing formal work opportunities. Such limitations have increased according to 52 per cent of key informants since the start of the pandemic. Presently, 67 per cent report no existence of public work programmes in their locality that are directly targeting mobile populations' unique needs.

Percentage of key informants who report:



## PILLAR FOUR

IV

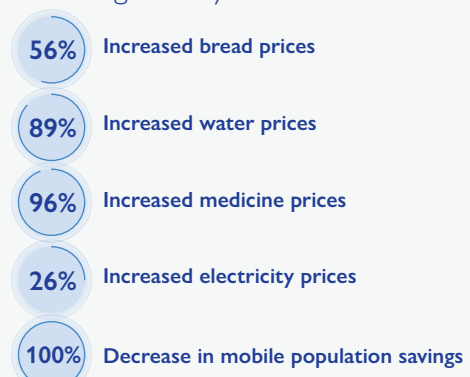


### MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION

Across most localities assessed (according to 96% of key informants), basic consumer food prices have soared. Bread prices appear to be in continual flux, with approximately 56 per cent change observed since the previous month. All 27 key informants (100%) identify the rise of fuel prices, as well as the price of water (indicated by 89% of key informants) and the price of medicine (indicated by 96%). In contrast, electricity prices appear more stable, with only 26 per cent of key informants reporting a dramatic increase in their respective locality.

The data collected was unable to reveal much about the saving capacity of mobile populations. Key informants have estimated, however, that across all the localities (100%), the savings of mobile populations have decreased throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Percentage of key informants who report:



# PILLAR FIVE

V



## SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Out of the 27 key informants interviewed, 70 per cent report mobile populations to feel safe in their day-to-day lives – security incidents (such as robbery and theft) having decreased in their locality (52% of respondents) since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparatively, a third of key informants (33%) observe an increase in security incidents. In such cases, migrants and IDPs are only legally allowed to report security incidents to local authorities in their locality, according to 70 per cent of key informants – perhaps linked to only 60 per cent reporting their localities to be equipped with community-based organisations focused on the welfare of migrants and IDPs. Furthermore, 63 per cent of key informants observe informal groups focused on providing support to displaced communities, out of which, community participation has increased by 47 per cent.

Data collected from 78 per cent of key informants indicate minimal impact/changes in the relations between mobile and host populations since the outbreak of the pandemic. In fact, the impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures is perceived to have affected population groups equally according to 48 per cent of key informants.

### Percentage of key informants who report:

- 70%** Mobile populations to feel safe
- 52%** Decrease in security incidents
- 33%** Increase in security incidents
- 60%** Community-based organisations supporting IDPs and migrants
- 47%** Increase in community participation in supporting IDPs
- 78%** Relations between mobile and host communities remain the same

# PILLAR SIX

VI



## MOBILITY

All localities (100%) report no impediments to the movements of mobile populations in their area. In fact, 74 per cent of key informants report their respective localities to have even lifted all lockdown measures and have no penalties in place. During the reporting month and as a result of the pandemic, however, 81 per cent of key informants have observed minimal IDP and migrant movement in or out of their respective localities.

### Percentage of key informants who report:

- 74%** All lockdown measures to be lifted
- 81%** No movements this past month (December)

### DTM SERVICES & CONTACTS

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