



European  
University  
Institute

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

## Migration from and to Sudan

*Amna Omer Mohamed-Ali*

---

---

**CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2011/24**

---

---

**Series - Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Migration:  
Recent Developments**  
*Demographic and Economic Module*



**CARIM**  
**Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration**

**Analytic and Synthetic Notes – Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Migration:  
Recent Developments  
Demographic and Economic Module  
CARIM-AS 2010/24**

**Migration from and to Sudan**

**Amna Omer Mohamed-Ali**  
Assistant Director, Central Bureau of Statistics,  
Department of Census and Demographic Studies, Khartoum

The entire set of papers on Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Migration: Recent Developments are available at <http://www.carim.org/ql/MigrationDevelopments>.

© 2010, European University Institute  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Any additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

Requests should be addressed to [carim@eui.eu](mailto:carim@eui.eu)

If cited or quoted, reference should be made as follows:

[Full name of the author(s)], [title], CARIM AS [series number], Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, [year of publication].

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS PUBLICATION CANNOT IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BE REGARDED AS THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/>  
<http://www.carim.org/Publications/>  
<http://cadmus.eui.eu>

## **CARIM**

The Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) was created at the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), in February 2004 and co-financed by the European Commission, DG AidCo, currently under the Thematic programme for the cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration and asylum.

Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and forecast migration in Southern & Eastern Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Countries (hereafter Region).

CARIM is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) of the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), and a network of scientific correspondents based in the 17 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Palestine, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

All are studied as origin, transit and immigration countries. External experts from the European Union and countries of the Region also contribute to CARIM activities.

CARIM carries out the following activities:

- Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan migration database;
- Research and publications;
- Meetings of academics and between experts and policy makers;
- Migration Summer School;
- Outreach.

The activities of CARIM cover three aspects of international migration in the Region: economic and demographic, legal, and socio-political.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: [www.carim.org](http://www.carim.org)

*For more information:*

Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)

Convento

Via delle Fontanelle 19

50014 San Domenico di Fiesole

Italy

Tel: +39 055 46 85 878

Fax: + 39 055 46 85 755

Email: [carim@eui.eu](mailto:carim@eui.eu)

**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/>

## **Abstract**

In this paper, a survey of the demographic aspects of migration from and to Sudan is presented. One of the main limitations in approaching migration from and to Sudan is the poor data coverage, quality and accuracy of official statistics. Emigration seems to be increasing. As to immigration patterns, Sudan has historically hosted a large number of refugees from neighboring countries and Sudan is also an important origin country for asylum seekers and refugees. The characteristics of Sudanese labor emigrants are varied. Agricultural workers are most numerous among those workers seeking fortunes abroad, followed by equipment mechanics and then professionals and scientists. Assessing the impact of labor emigration on the local economy is extremely difficult. As to destination countries, Sudanese emigrants are to be found all over the world. Much work needs to be done to perfect data collection, with an emphasis on coverage, accuracy, quality and relevance. It is very important for government agencies concerned with migration to build strong and relevant databases. Cooperation among such agencies is to be recommended.

## **Résumé**

Cet article présente les résultats d'une analyse se rapportant aux aspects démographiques de la migration en provenance et à destination du Soudan. De nombreuses difficultés liées au recueil de données, à la qualité et de la fiabilité des statistiques officielles ont pu être relevées au cours de cette enquête. Le phénomène de l'émigration s'inscrit dans une courbe de nette progression. S'agissant des caractéristiques de l'immigration, le Soudan a traditionnellement constitué un terrain d'accueil pour un grand nombre de réfugiés issus de pays voisins, et représente également un important Etat d'origine pour les demandeurs d'asile et les réfugiés. Les caractéristiques des émigrants travailleurs soudanais sont multiples et variées. Les agriculteurs constituent un large segment au sein de la population de travailleurs cherchant fortune à l'étranger, suivi par les mécaniciens d'équipements, puis par les professionnels et scientifiques. L'évaluation de l'impact de l'émigration de travail sur l'économie locale est très difficile. Concernant le choix des pays de destination, les émigrants soudanais se répartissent sur l'ensemble de la planète. Davantage d'efforts restent à fournir en vue de renforcer le recueil de données, à travers la définition de leur finalité, de leur fiabilité, de leur qualité et de leur pertinence. Il revient, à ce titre, aux agences gouvernementales en charge de la migration d'établir des bases de données crédibles et pertinentes. La coopération entre ces agences est à ce titre plus que recommandée.

## **Introduction**

Migration is attracting ever more interest from social, economic and political scholars given its various impacts on these fields. And international emigration from African countries has had effects on both the sending and receiving countries. The so-called death boats of African migrants to Europe are a case in point, while immigration in Africa comes mainly from other African countries.

This inter-African immigration is rather ironic when it is remembered that socio-economic conditions are almost the same in most African countries, especially in the Sub-Saharan African countries. This internal migration process is no different either from emigration or immigration in terms of continuity if not in magnitude. Different factors have contributed to internal migration in Africa, ranging from conflicts to climate changes. This adds pressure to the authorities to work out permanent socio-economic and political solutions to stem the adverse effects of the demographic changes that migration brings. Migration in the Sudan is no different from migration dynamics in a typical African country facing similar conditions and at a similar stage of development.

Sudan has witnessed different spells of emigration and immigration since independence. But a problem in understanding migration from and to Sudan is the data coverage, the quality and the accuracy of official statistics.

Census data have shown that migration is a continuing process of different magnitudes depending on the push and pull factors present at the time. The only survey focusing on migration to have been carried out in Sudan was the Labor Force and Migration Survey of 1996. Unfortunately not a single question on external migration is included in the 2009 Population and Housing Census. It seems that there is no systematic and scientific monitoring of the migration process that maintains data coverage, accuracy and relevance.

Other administrative data are available from several governmental institutions including the Bureau of the Sudanese Working Abroad, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of the Interior and the Refugee Commission.

However, these administrative records are not always accurate – something flagged up by their conflicting estimates.

This problem boils down to the lack of a concept of coverage in the methodology of data collection. Each Government entity working on migrants is only concerned with the bureaucratic aspect of handling data on migrants. Accordingly, a great deal of data are missed, misconceived or their relevance is misunderstood. By and large, data on migration remain an important element in the Sudanese government's attempt to design an effective policy to handle migration dynamics and bring it under control. Although authorities are very much concerned about migration, and migration statistics are employed in many Government institutions, there is the perennial problem of a lack of coverage, poor accuracy and doubtful relevance.

## **International emigration patterns**

There follows the numbers for Sudanese outward flows in 2008 by type of occupation.

**Table 1. Outward labor flows of Sudanese nationals by occupation (before migration), 2008**

Occupation	Number	%
Directors, Managers	95	0.4
Professionals, Scientists	1,617	7.3
Technicians	465	2.1
Clerics, Accountants	399	1.8
Sales and Service Persons	499	2.3
Agriculture, herding and Hunting	13,518	61.0
Handicrafts	1,635	7.4
Operation and Equipment Fitting	3,039	13.7
Transport	0	0.0
Primary Occupations	877	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,144</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : Ministry of Labor and Public Service

The table above shows that more than half of Sudanese nationals emigrated for working reasons in 2008 were from the agricultural sector, the largest sector in the economy in terms of employment, despite the fact that the contribution of agriculture to the GDP has receded in recent years as the services sector grows. The picture from the previous years is more or less the same. So the withdrawal of labor from the agricultural sector has gone in two directions: to the service sector in Sudan and abroad. Pressure on the sector will reach alarming proportions in the future if the trend continues, given negative impact of globalization and labor migration in an agricultural open economy.

The other significant phenomenon is the exodus of professionals and scientists which has heralded brain drain with its adverse effect on the economy. These figures only show regular workers who passed through the official channels; real figures could be significantly higher.

As to the stock of Sudanese working abroad, in 2007 it equals 719,147 individuals. In terms of total migrants, table 2 shows an increasing work migration abroad.

**Table 2. Sudanese labor emigrants by country of residence, 2007**

Country of residence	2005		2006		2007	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Arab Countries	661,027	99.4	696,055	99.4	714,477	99.4
African Countries	655	0.1	955	0.1	747	0.1
Asian Countries	601	0.1	585	0.1	659	0.1
European Countries	1,724	0.3	2,016	0.3	2,124	0.3
Australia	16	0.0	19	0.0	21	0.0
USA	672	0.1	879	0.1	965	0.1
Canada	127	0.0	0	0.0	145	0.0
Latin America	7	0.0	0	0.0	9	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>664,829</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>700,509</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>719,147</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Bureau of the Sudanese Working Abroad (in Statistical Yearbook for the Year 2007, Khartoum, 2008)

They large majority of Sudanese nationals working abroad reside in Arab countries (99.4%).

### International immigration patterns

Most immigration comes from neighboring countries and tends to settle in border Sudanese areas as well as in Khartoum. According to census data, the number of foreigners in Sudan other than refugees equaled 215,195 in 2008, meaning an insignificant proportion of the total resident population, i.e. 0.5%. Ethiopians, Eritreans and Chadians – all neighboring countries – are the most frequent immigrants by representing respectively 15.9%, 14.5% and 13.5% of the total of foreigners (table 3).

**Table 3. Foreign resident population in Sudan by nationality and sex, 2008**

Nationality	Sex			
	Male	Female	Total	
			Number	%
Ethiopian	15,453	18,748	<b>34,201</b>	<b>15.9</b>
Eritrean	16,448	14,756	<b>31,204</b>	<b>14.5</b>
Chadian	14,001	15,013	<b>29,014</b>	<b>13.5</b>
Egyptian	11,833	5,290	<b>17,123</b>	<b>8.0</b>
Ugandan	10,707	4,349	<b>15,056</b>	<b>7.0</b>
Nigerian	4,753	4,681	<b>9,434</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Central African	4,711	4,069	<b>8,780</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Kenyan	4,964	1,340	<b>6,304</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Chinese	5,702	245	<b>5,947</b>	<b>2.8</b>
Indian	4,143	648	<b>4,791</b>	<b>2.2</b>
Congolese	2,011	1,365	<b>3,376</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Libyan	588	526	<b>1,114</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Malian	218	143	<b>361</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Other nationalities	16,674	5,605	<b>22,279</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Nationality not reported	16,360	9,851	<b>26,211</b>	<b>12.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>128,566</b>	<b>86,629</b>	<b>215,195</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sudanese Census - 2008

As to their profile, they are mainly men (59.7%), despite the number of females exceeds the number of males among some nationalities, e.g. Ethiopians and Chadians, among which the proportion of females equal respectively 54.8% and 51.7%. This particular phenomenon suggests that there is involuntary immigration here. Conflicts as in the case of Chad and climatic changes as in the case of Ethiopia are strong reasons behind the immigrations of females from these countries.

It is reasonable to ask whether these immigrants are beneficial to the economy or not? Can they be classed as labour and if so how many of them?



**Table 4. Resident population in Sudan by nationality and age group, 2009 (1<sup>st</sup> part)**

Age group	Nationality							
	Egyptian	Libyan	Eritrean	Ethiopian	Ugandan	Kenyan	Congolese	Chadian
0-4	1,698	230	3,423	2,191	458	116	186	4157
5-9	1,971	92	3,289	1,979	360	161	250	4364
10-14	1,116	127	3,134	1,872	270	88	180	3298
15-19	1,113	117	3,100	5,397	1,127	170	332	2698
20-24	1,920	93	3,878	7,730	3,283	881	486	2149
25-29	2,284	85	3,519	5,117	3,773	1,362	584	2149
30-34	1,667	100	2,438	2,723	2,384	1,168	401	1791
35-39	1,399	73	1,990	2,074	1,566	911	324	1652
40-44	1,098	52	1,820	1,558	897	633	191	1548
45-49	794	38	1,310	1,066	471	443	139	1029
50-54	704	38	1,164	922	251	195	119	1023
55-59	330	17	599	516	75	90	57	461
60-64	370	10	550	442	65	45	47	800
65-69	175	10	323	205	24	14	27	376
70-74	210	15	349	208	21	15	25	613
75-79	79	7	108	80	15	6	8	247
80-84	234	5	132	81	6	3	8	346
85-89	21	-	37	16	4	2	4	115
90-94	34	1	27	15	4	1	5	80
95 and over	6	4	14	9	2	-	3	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,123</b>	<b>1,114</b>	<b>31,204</b>	<b>34,201</b>	<b>15,056</b>	<b>6,304</b>	<b>3,376</b>	<b>29,014</b>

**Table 4. Resident population by nationality and age group, 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> part)**

Age group	Nationality								
	Central African	Nigerians	Maliens	Chinese	Indians	Other Countries	Not Reported	Sudanese	Total Population
0-4	1,036	1,318	42	9	78	845	3,972	5,826,232	5,845,991
5-9	874	1,137	18	2	50	713	3,044	5,783,472	5,801,776
10-14	1,140	1,012	55	24	876	655	2,673	5,019,517	5,036,037
15-19	814	891	26	25	73	977	2,576	4,156,919	4,176,355
20-24	1,020	923	52	495	443	3,650	2,896	3,507,113	3,537,012
25-29	611	701	50	941	798	3,673	2,417	3,086,902	3,114,966
30-34	686	562	33	1,080	741	3,065	1,916	2,483,208	2,503,963
35-39	348	519	19	1,377	630	2,934	1,633	2,296,916	2,314,365
40-44	525	477	20	1,105	451	2,049	1,329	1,760,078	1,773,831
45-49	197	299	9	594	232	1,416	879	1,294,764	1,303,680
50-54	421	370	14	202	182	1,009	865	1,087,227	1,094,706
55-59	123	208	8	64	97	524	451	632,181	635,801
60-64	296	259	2	18	56	332	556	687,255	691,103
65-69	64	129	3	6	36	166	240	394,490	396,288
70-74	221	220	2	2	27	130	293	413,344	415,695
75-79	31	121	-	1	9	56	142	192,158	193,068
80-84	228	139	4	-	8	52	210	177,634	178,990
85-89	25	47	2	-	1	12	38	64,911	65,235
90-94	105	46	1	2	2	10	45	41,168	41,546
95 and over	15	56	1	-	1	11	36	33,806	34,082
<b>Total</b>	<b>8780</b>	<b>9434</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>5947</b>	<b>4791</b>	<b>22279</b>	<b>26211</b>	<b>38,939,295</b>	<b>39,154,490</b>

Source: Sudanese Census - 2008

A raw proxy of that can be done by their age profile whether the large majority (71.2%) of foreign nationals in Sudan are include in the group 15-64, i.e. potentially active.

### Refugees in and from Sudan

Data on refugees could be ascertained from official records, sample surveys and censuses. Due to the striking impact of refugees on domestic and international politics, a certain degree of emphasis is being laid on refugees' data. The Refugees' Commission of the Sudanese Government collects and disseminates data on refugees for Government and international use. Nevertheless, complete coverage of the number of refugees and the ascertainment of accurate statistics on them has proved extremely difficult. The process of keeping refugees in camps makes it easier to count them and collect information on their status. The following table shows the number of refugees by nationality as of September 2009.

**Table 5. Refugees in Sudan, September 2009**

Nationality	Number	%
Eritrean	349,500	55.3
Chadian	158,000	25.0
Ethiopian	97,180	15.4
Congolese	15,000	2.4
Ugandan	5,000	0.8
Somalian	7,000	1.1
Central African	86	0.0
Others	50	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>631,816</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : Sudanese Refugee Commission

According with the Sudanese Refugee Commission, the number of refugees in Sudan equaled 631,816 in 2009. Most of them were from Eritrea (55.3%), Chad (25.0%) and Ethiopia (15.4%) (table 5).

**Table 6. Refugees in Sudan by state and type of settlement, September 2009**

State	Settlement in camps	Settlement outside camps	Total
Kassala,Gedarif and Red Sea	107,190	301,863	409,053
Sinnar,Gezira	4,246	15,000	19,246
Western Darfur	18,517	130,000	148,517
Equatoria	0	20,000	20,000
Khartoum	0	35,000	35,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>129,953</b>	<b>501,863</b>	<b>631,816</b>

Source: Sudanese Refugee Commission

It is evident that Western and Eastern Sudan receive the majority of refugees. It is also evident that the number of refugees outside the camps far exceeds the numbers in the camps, which may prompt the question of how the refugees outside the camps were counted by the Refugees' Commission (table 6).

Large numbers of Sudanese nationals abroad are refugees. According to the Sudanese Refugee Commission, in 2009 their number equaled 377,606, mainly concentrated in neighboring countries, especially in Chad (55.3%), Uganda (12.6%) and Ethiopia (10.2%) (table 7).

**Table 7. Sudanese refugees in neighboring countries by country of residence, 2009**

Country of residence	Number	%
Chad	209,000	55.3
Uganda	47,412	12.6
Ethiopia	38,646	10.2
DRC	33,168	8.8
Kenya	32,254	8.5
Egypt	16,696	4.4
Eritrea	430	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>377,606</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sudanese Refugee Commission

## **Conclusion**

One of the main issues in approaching migration from and to Sudan is the lack of reliable and disaggregated data. This study then is pioneering in attempting to analyze the main demographic and economic aspects of migration there. Sudanese emigrants can be found all over the world and emigration seems to be on the rise. As to labor emigration, agricultural workers are most numerous among the workers seeking fortunes abroad, followed by operators and equipment mechanics and then professionals and scientists. However, assessing the impact of labor emigration on the local economy is difficult: migration has both negative and positive aspects, but it is almost impossible to arrive at any net effect; policies can only try to maximize benefits and minimize costs. As to foreign nationals living in Sudan, they typically originate in neighboring countries, though their weight on the Sudanese population, it has to be said, is almost negligible. Finally, Sudan is an important receiver and sender of forced migrants. Again, the reciprocity between Sudan and neighboring countries is striking here.