

AIPG Statement Paper

On the Conflict in Sudan, AIPG's Responsibilities, and Its Humanitarian Engagement

I. Introduction

The Association for International Promotion of Gums (AIPG) issues this statement to address several questions and misconceptions that have emerged regarding the situation in Sudan and the alleged role of actors within the acacia gum supply chain. As Sudan continues to endure a severe and protracted conflict, speculation has arisen suggesting that companies involved in the trade of gum arabic, including members of the AIPG, may be indirectly contributing to the financing of the war. The AIPG firmly rejects these allegations. This document provides a comprehensive explanation of the humanitarian situation in Sudan, outlines the legal and ethical obligations that bind all AIPG members, and demonstrates why any involvement in conflict financing is incompatible with the Association's established standards. It further describes the humanitarian initiatives supported by the AIPG to assist those affected by the crisis.

II. Humanitarian Context: The Situation in Sudan

Sudan is experiencing one of the most profound crises in its modern history. The ongoing power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has plunged the country into an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. The UN already describes the situation as the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe.^{1,2,3}

This war has been marked by extreme violence, including massacres, systematic rape, kidnappings, and the public dissemination of atrocities, which has devastated communities and heightened international scrutiny. Regional powers each backing different parties in the conflict are increasingly alarmed by the shifting military landscape. Despite diplomatic efforts, including proposed ceasefires, no sustainable truce has taken hold.^{1,2,3,4}

For civilians, the consequences are catastrophic. Sudan is now the epicentre of the world's largest displacement crisis, with an estimated 14 million people forced to flee their homes, many of them multiple times as battle lines shift. Widespread hunger, the lack of clean drinking water, and the collapse of essential infrastructure including electricity, hospitals, health centres have created life-threatening conditions. Repeated outbreaks of cholera and dengue fever, combined with severe shortages of medical supplies, have pushed the already fragile health system beyond its limits. Women and girls face heightened risks of violence and exploitation, especially while fleeing conflict zones.^{1,4,5,6}

Even relatively stable regions such as Gedaref State are under immense strain. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people from over ten conflict-affected states has overwhelmed local capacity. Resources for shelter, sanitation, nutrition and healthcare are stretched to breaking point. Without substantial and sustained humanitarian support, the situation risks deteriorating even further.^{1,5,7}

Overall, Sudan stands at a critical crossroads. Military dynamics suggest further escalation, while the humanitarian situation continues to collapse largely out of the international spotlight. Without decisive political action and a major increase in humanitarian assistance, the country could slide even deeper into a cycle of violence, displacement and societal breakdown.^{1,2,3,7}

III. Ethical Foundations of AIPG Membership

The AIPG and its members adhere to a strict ethical and legal framework that explicitly prohibits any form of conduct that could contribute to illegal or violent activities, including armed conflict. The Association's Business Policies state that corporate conduct must remain free of "dishonest methods such as bribery, fraud or any other form of unfair trading practices," and emphasise that members must ensure that their operations do not support illicit or violent actors. These requirements include the responsibility to respect human rights, comply with national and international legislation and uphold clear, verifiable standards of integrity. The AIPG Code of Conduct reinforces these obligations by demanding transparent, lawful and responsible business practices across the entire natural gum supply chain. Members must adhere to relevant international guidelines, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, ILO conventions and OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises on responsible business conduct. The Code of Conduct also mandates the rejection of anti-competitive, corrupt or otherwise unethical practices. Under these conditions, any allegation that AIPG members engage in bribery, facilitate unlawful payments or contribute financially to armed groups directly contradicts the documented expectations and binding requirements that define AIPG membership.^{8,9,10}

IV. Transparency and Traceability within the Acacia Gum Supply Chain

In addition to ethical requirements, the operational structure of the acacia gum supply chain, as shaped by AIPG membership obligations, ensures transparency and traceability. A central element of the AIPG's Good Practices for Gums is the requirement for traceability and lot identification, which ensures that each batch of gum can be tracked throughout the supply chain, from collection through processing and export. These procedures prevent the concealment of unofficial payments or irregular transactions and ensure that members maintain full accountability in their operations.^{8,11} The acacia gum sector is largely composed of smallholder farmers, collectors, local transporters and legally established exporters whose livelihoods depend on lawful and transparent trade. The Business Policies highlight that the sector supports rural communities by providing essential income and by promoting sustainable land-use practices that help prevent desertification. These realities underscore that the sector is an economic stabiliser for local populations rather than a mechanism through which conflict actors could be financed. Given these structural and procedural safeguards, the suggestion that AIPG members could be implicated in the financing of the conflict is inconsistent with the practical and regulatory realities of the industry.^{8,11,12}

V. The AIPG's Statutory Mandate

The Statutes of the AIPG clearly define its mission as one that concerns the promotion, protection and scientific advancement of natural gums. The Association is tasked with safeguarding the position of natural gums, monitoring legislative developments, promoting research, and cooperating with established international bodies such as FAO, JECFA and FDA. The Statutes provide no mandate for political involvement, nor do they enable any activity related to armed conflict. Governance is carried out transparently through the General Assembly and through structured procedures that ensure accountability and adherence to the Association's founding objectives. The nature of the AIPG as a technical and industry-focused organisation fundamentally contradicts any allegation that it or its members could be associated with the financing of warfare in Sudan.^{8,9,11}

VI. Humanitarian Engagement: AIPG Support for CARE in Sudan

Recognising the profound humanitarian needs in Sudan, the AIPG has committed itself to supporting relief efforts that directly assist affected populations. In 2025 and 2026, the Association donated a total amount of €20,000 to CARE. These funds support CARE's emergency and development programmes across Sudan, which focus heavily on vulnerable groups, including women, children and displaced families.

CARE has been active in Sudan since 1979 and currently operates in East Darfur, South Darfur, South Kordofan and Gedaref State. Its work includes restoring damaged hospitals, supporting health and nutrition centres, ensuring access to clean drinking water and sanitation, providing hygiene products and delivering services to protect women and girls from violence. CARE's approach includes distributing cash assistance and vouchers, enabling families to meet their most urgent needs independently and with dignity.

The project supported by the AIPG specifically focuses on providing life-saving health and nutrition services in Alkhatmia and Bella in Gedaref State. It addresses acute health threats, including cholera and dengue outbreaks, and operates essential health facilities such as primary health care centres and a stabilisation centre for children suffering from severe malnutrition. The project is expected to reach more than fifty thousand people and includes maternal and newborn care, emergency treatment, routine vaccinations, psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence and improved infection prevention systems. CARE notes that contributions such as those from the AIPG directly help protect the lives of families in some of the most at-risk areas of Sudan.^{5,6,7,13}

VII. Conclusion

The AIPG reaffirms its unequivocal position that neither the Association nor its members engage in any activity that could contribute directly or indirectly to the financing of the conflict in Sudan. The stringent ethical, legal and procedural frameworks that govern AIPG membership categorically prohibit bribery, corruption or involvement in illicit or violent activities. The transparency and traceability embedded in the acacia gum supply chain further safeguard against any potential misuse of commercial structures for unlawful purposes. Simultaneously, the AIPG remains committed to humanitarian efforts that support communities affected by the crisis. Through its continued partnership with CARE, the Association contributes to alleviating suffering and reinforcing the resilience of vulnerable populations. By combining responsible business practices with tangible humanitarian action, the AIPG demonstrates its dedication to ethical conduct and to the welfare of the communities linked to the natural gum sector.

References

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- [11] FAO / WHO Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) and Codex Alimentarius Commission. Safety evaluations, specifications and standards relating to gum arabic (acacia gum) and its use in food, as well as technical and ecological background on gum-producing systems.
- [12] Peer-reviewed scientific literature on *Acacia senegal* and gum arabic production in the Sudanese and Sahelian “gum belt”, including studies on tapping intensity, tree physiology, yield dynamics, sustainable harvesting techniques and the Sonki tapping tool (e.g. Ballal M.E. et al.; Adam H. et al.; regional forestry and agroforestry research institutes).
- [13] CARE International. *CARE’s Humanitarian Work in Sudan* and project documentation on multi-sectoral programmes in East Darfur, South Darfur, South Kordofan, Kassala, Khartoum and Gedaref State, including health, nutrition, WASH, protection and cash assistance interventions.