

Focus | Conflict in the Sudan



2024 GLOBAL REPORT
ON FOOD CRISES

JOINT ANALYSIS FOR BETTER DECISIONS

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Heavy fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023 has had devastating consequences across the Sudan and in the neighbouring countries of Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

The humanitarian situation is dire. Millions of people among the displaced and host communities, especially women and children, are experiencing severe access constraints to basic goods and services, including food, water and shelter, with profound and prolonged impacts on their food security and nutrition.

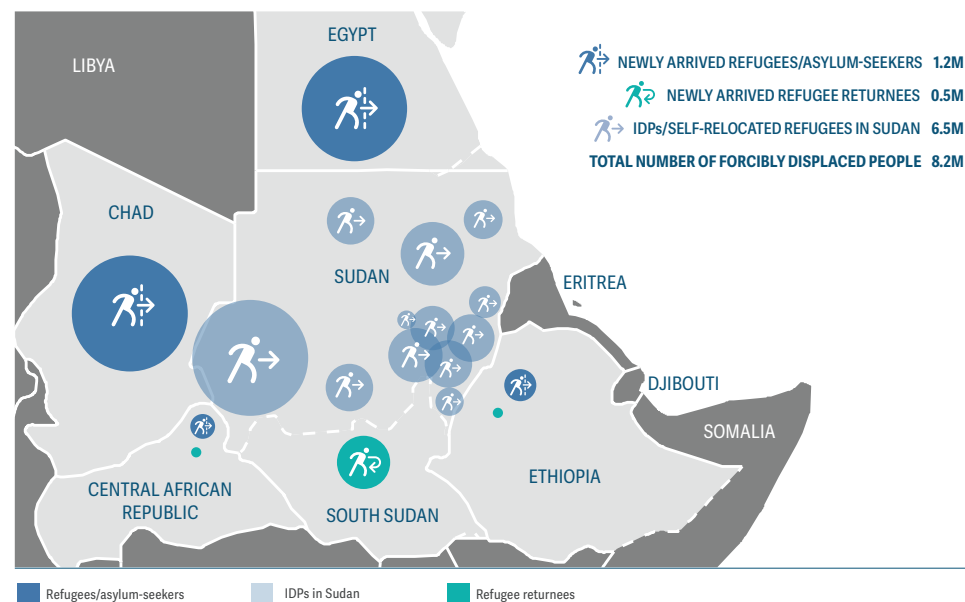
The Sudan is now East Africa's largest food crisis

In 2023, during the June–September lean season, around 20.3 million people, or 42 percent of the total population, experienced high levels of acute food insecurity, 74 percent more than during the 2022 lean season (IPC, August 2023). Seasonal improvements in food access and availability from October 2023 to February 2024 following the main harvest were expected to be limited by the severity of the conflict's impact in Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, Khartoum and Gezira. Around 17.7 million people were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity during this post-harvest period (IPC, December 2023).

Major impact on the country's agriculture sector

The conflict has severely restricted access to land for cultivation, livestock movement and seasonal activities, making it extremely difficult for households to produce food. Major infrastructure for food production and storage has been destroyed, including in southeastern areas – the country's breadbasket. Supply chain disruptions further limited the availability and distribution of seeds, inputs and agricultural finance. Irrigation canals cannot be maintained. Violence is reducing

MAP 2.5 Number of forcibly displaced people between mid-April 2023 and February 2024



Source: IOM, OCHA, UNHCR and COR, February 2024.

access to water and pasture for livestock and disrupting seasonal migrations in many areas (IPC, December 2023). The sorghum and millet harvests in Gezira, Sennar, White Nile and South Kordofan were significantly disrupted. In 2024, the conflict affected key production areas, including the Gezira irrigation scheme, which produces 40–50 percent of the national wheat output and where critical irrigation infrastructure was damaged (FEWS NET, February 2024).

According to the findings of a 2023 Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, cereal production is estimated at well below average levels (FAO, March 2024). In this context, food import requirements – which covered 80–85 percent of countrywide

wheat consumption needs before the conflict – are expected to increase further. Lower food availability is expected to have a compounding impact on already widespread and high levels of acute food insecurity across the country (FEWS NET, February 2024).

The world's largest internal displacement crisis

By the end of 2023, about 7.7 million people had been displaced since the onset of hostilities in April 2023, including about 6 million IDPs, 1.5 million refugees, and nearly 200 000 self-relocated refugees internally displaced in the Sudan (UNHCR, December 2023; IOM, December 2023). When added to the millions of people

internally displaced by conflict over two decades, there were an estimated 9.1 million IDPs by the end of 2023, including 3 million children – the largest internal displacement crisis worldwide (IOM, January 2024).

As Map 2.5 shows, the number of displaced people continued to increase rapidly in early 2024, reaching a total of 8.2 million by February, consisting mainly of IDPs/self-relocated refugees followed by Sudanese refugees/asylum-seekers and refugee returnees of other nationalities (UNHCR, February 2024).

The limited humanitarian access to conflict hotspots due to recurring telecommunications issues, security concerns and high fuel costs hindered domestic travel to conduct reverification exercises, undermining the provision of assistance and support to affected populations, thereby contributing to rising numbers of IDPs (IOM, January 2024) and acutely food-insecure populations.

Alarming levels of acute malnutrition threaten the lives of children and women

The Sudan is among the food crises with the highest prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among children under 5 years old, at an estimated 13.6 percent, a High severity according to WHO thresholds (OCHA, December 2023) even before the outbreak of the conflict. Massive displacement – resulting in lack of water and poor hygiene, increasing risk of infections, and limited access and availability to basic health and nutrition services – worsened malnutrition among children and women since April 2023. About 76 percent of the 3 million acutely malnourished children under 5 years old and 0.9 million acutely malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women (OCHA, May 2023) were in areas most affected by conflict. In these areas, the GAM prevalence

was above the Very High threshold of 15 percent (OCHA, December 2023).

Micronutrient deficiencies are widespread, evidenced by the fact that 48 percent of children aged under 5 suffer from anaemia due to iron deficiency. Only 25 percent of children aged under 5 achieve Minimum Dietary Diversity, a situation worsened by extensive displacement limiting access to nutritious foods and disrupting regular feeding and caregiving practices (OCHA, December 2023).

The nutrition outlook is expected to deteriorate in 2024, particularly during the June–September lean season, due to ongoing conflict, worsening food insecurity, compromised health, WASH and nutrition services, prolonged displacement and extremely high food prices. More than 3.5 million children are projected to be acutely malnourished in 2024, of whom more than 0.7 million are expected to be severely affected – and at increased risk of death without timely treatment (UNICEF, HAC, December 2023).

A crisis beyond the country’s borders

The ongoing conflict in the Sudan has had a profound impact on border regions in neighbouring countries, where refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees are gathering in significant numbers. These areas, including parts of **Central African Republic, Chad** and **South Sudan**, were already grappling with severe acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition before the conflict (GRFC 2023, May 2023).

The increased influx of refugees is intensifying competition for limited resources, raising the potential for tensions between displaced and local communities, while stretching already scarce resources.

By the end of 2023, among the 1.5 million people who fled the Sudan, including Sudanese nationals and refugees from neighbouring countries who were hosted in the Sudan, 0.5 million were in both South Sudan and Chad, 0.4 million in Egypt, 43 700 in Ethiopia and nearly 26 000 in Central



Many of those crossing the border are South Sudanese refugee returnees travelling on boats to reach their communities of origin where they face extreme levels of economic hardship and hunger.

African Republic. Most of the cross-border displacements into South Sudan were refugee returnees (UNHCR, January 2024).

In **Chad**, the arrival of new refugees added to the over 0.4 million Sudanese refugees who had been living in camps there for over a decade (ACAPS, January 2024), putting more pressure on the limited resources of host communities, with the number of refugees and returnees approximately four times greater than the local population in places such as Adré town (Ouaddaï province) (ACAPS, January 2024). A Cadre Harmonisé special protocol activated to assess the acute food insecurity situation of these affected populations found that 24 percent of nearly 315 000 refugees analysed in two eastern provinces (Sila and Wadi Fira) faced high levels of acute food insecurity in October–December 2023 (CILSS, November 2023).

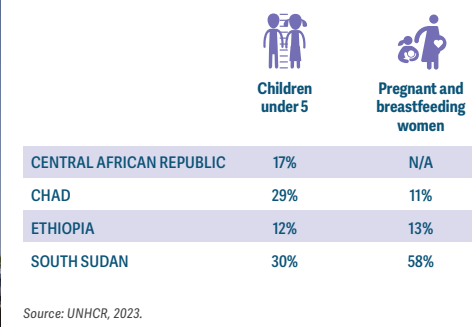
Humanitarian needs among **South Sudanese** refugee returnees, who have been displaced several times, are dire. Around 28 000 or

10 percent of the returnee population are expected to face catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5) in April–July 2024 (IPC, November 2023).

Following the RSF attacks on Wad Madani in the heavily populated Sudanese state of Gezira in December 2023, the number of Sudanese refugees arriving in South Sudan also increased considerably, spiking in the first half of January. Average daily arrivals fluctuated between about 1 500 and 2 500 per day and were expected at similar levels in 2024 as the conflict continues (FEWS NET, January 2024).

In **Central African Republic**, many refugees were hesitant to travel far from the border and stayed in the Amdafock area in the rainy season instead of moving to Korsi, a refugee reception centre in the city of Birao. As conflict continued in South Darfur, by the end of 2023 many had relocated to Korsi to seek protection. As of January, the data cut-off date for the GRFC, no data were available on the

FIG. 2.18 Prevalence of acute malnutrition among refugees at border crossings, 2023



food security conditions of Sudanese refugees in these areas. A report by IOM indicated that about 40 percent of them said they crossed the border seeking humanitarian assistance (IOM, July 2023).

Levels of acute malnutrition surpassed Very High thresholds among those fleeing the Sudan

Regarding nutrition, refugee and returnee populations who have sought refuge in Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan had MUAC measurements indicating levels of wasting above the 15 percent Very High WHO threshold for all countries, except Ethiopia.

The situation was the most severe in border points in South Sudan, with screenings between May and November, indicating that 30 percent of children under 5 years old and a staggering 58 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) were acutely malnourished.

This situation was also extremely concerning in Chad, where MUAC screening at border points indicated 29 percent of children aged under 5, and 11 percent of PBW were acutely malnourished. In border crossing points of Central African Republic, the prevalence was 17 percent among children under 5 years (see figure 2.18). In Ethiopia, the acute malnutrition situation is relatively better but still above the High WHO threshold, at 12 percent for children and 13 percent for PBW.



Founded by the European Union, FAO and WFP in 2016, the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to addressing the root causes of food crises and finding lasting solutions to them, through shared analysis and knowledge, strengthened coordination in evidence-based responses and collective efforts across the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus.



The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) is a technical global platform for the exchange of expertise, knowledge and best practices on food security and nutrition analysis. Its purpose is to promote timely, independent and consensus-based information about food crises, while also highlighting and addressing critical data gaps. As a key partner of the GNAFC, FSIN coordinates the publication of the *Global Report on Food Crises*.