



Spotlight on the Sudan

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 the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

Over a year into the conflict, the Sudan faces one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history. Millions of people among the displaced and host communities, especially women and children, are experiencing severe access constraints to basic commodities and services, including food, water and shelter, with severe impacts on their food security and nutrition.

Acute food insecurity in the Sudan has reached the highest in IPC history

The July 2024 IPC analysis estimated that 25.6 million people, or 54 percent of the total population, face high levels of acute food insecurity during the June–September 2024 lean season. Of these, 8.5 million face Emergency (IPC Phase 4), while close to 0.8 million are in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, Blue Nile, Al Jazirah and Khartoum. This marks a significant and alarming deterioration compared with the pre-conflict June–September 2022 lean season when 11.65 million people, or 24 percent of the total population, faced high levels of acute food insecurity. It also marks a major deterioration since the July–September 2023 lean season when 20.3 million people, or 42 percent of the population, faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Famine in Zamzam IDP camp

In July 2024, the IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC) found it plausible that Famine (IPC Phase 5) is ongoing in the Zamzam IDP camp near El Fasher town in North Darfur from August–October 2024 (FRC, July 2024).

As a result of the intensification of fighting, around 320 000 people are believed to have been displaced since mid-April in El Fasher. Around 150 000 to 200 000 of them are believed to have moved to Zamzam camp in search of security, basic services, and food since mid-May. The camp population expanded to over half a million in a few weeks (FRC, July 2024).

Areas are classified in Famine (IPC Phase 5) when at least 20 percent of households have an extreme lack of food and face starvation and destitution, resulting in extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and death. The classification signifies multi-sectoral collapse, with basic human needs for health services, water, food, nutrition, shelter and protection not being met.

If the conflict escalates further, preventing households from engaging in agricultural and casual labour activities during the 2024 agricultural season, and limiting the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the situation can only be expected to worsen. There is a risk of Famine in 14 areas (five

localities and nine clusters of IDPs and refugees, in Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, Al Jazirah states and some hotspots in Khartoum), if the conflict escalates further, including through increased mobilization of local militias (IPC, July 2024).

Most displaced individuals have lost their livelihoods, impacting their ability to produce and access food. Furthermore, displacement within localities has intensified competition and pressure on available food resources and services, while socioeconomic structures continue weakening. Between June and September, at least 533 000 IDPs and refugees in conflict-affected localities and states for which data were available (representing around 20 percent of the displaced population in the Sudan) are projected to experience Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) or Emergency (IPC Phase 4) (IPC, July 2024).

Major impact on the country's agriculture sector

National food availability for the 2023–2024 consumption year is significantly below needs. The conflict has severely restricted access to land for cultivation and seasonal activities, making it extremely difficult for households to produce food. Critical infrastructure for food production and storage has been destroyed, including in southeastern areas – the country's breadbasket.

Wheat production was estimated to be significantly below average due to disrupted planting, particularly in the Gezira Scheme, which typically accounts for around 40 percent of the wheat area in the country. It was forecasted

at 377 900 tonnes, 21 percent lower than the previous year and 46 percent below the five-year average.

Limited availability and high cost of agricultural inputs, including seeds, and limited access to agricultural finance exacerbated the situation, as supply chains remained interrupted. The 2023 Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) estimated national cereal production (sorghum, millet and wheat) at about 4.1 million tonnes, 46 percent below 2022's output and about 40 percent below the average of the previous five years. In Greater Kordofan and Greater Darfur regions, where the conflict has been especially intense, cereal production was estimated to be up to 80 percent below average, with an almost total crop failure in West Darfur state, where farmers could not access their fields (FAO-GIEWS, June 2024).

Combined with rapid currency depreciation, this has put upward pressure on staple food prices. For instance, the average retail price of wheat flour in May 2024 was 247 percent higher than the previous five-year average (IPC, July 2024). Livestock movement in search of water and pasture also continues to be disrupted.

The 2024 June–September (JJAS) rains are forecast to be largely above average due to an anticipated transition to La Niña. While this presents positive prospects for cereal and livestock production, concerns remain for cereal output due to the spread of conflict to southeastern key-producing areas in late 2023, and persistent shortages and high costs of agricultural inputs (FAO-GIEWS, June 2024).

FEWS NET assesses that the seasonal flood extent this year will be above normal and likely similar to recent years of severe flooding in the Sudan (FEWS NET, May 2024). Extensive flooding would bring further crop and livestock losses, damage infrastructure, and displace populations. As of 28 July 2024, heavy rainfall and flash floods had affected thousands of people in parts of Kassala state (OCHA, July 2024).

Alarming levels of acute malnutrition threaten lives of children and women

Since the start of the conflict, an already concerning acute malnutrition situation has significantly deteriorated due to massive displacement, resulting in poor sanitation and hygiene, increased risk of infections, and limited access and availability to basic health and nutrition services. WHO assesses that about 70 percent of health facilities and more than two-thirds of the main hospitals in the conflict-affected areas are either non-functional or destroyed. Those that are still functioning are in danger of closing due to shortages of medical staff, supplies and electricity.

In Zamzam camp, North Darfur, GAM prevalence among children under 5 years is estimated at 29.4 percent based on a MUAC screening conducted between March and April 2024, while in Zalingei locality, Central Darfur, it's 15.6 percent, according to a SMART survey done in March 2024. These are well above the WHO Very High threshold.

In other more accessible localities in Blue Nile, Gedaref and Kassala, GAM prevalence ranges from 9.6 to 16.9 percent, according to SMART surveys conducted between December 2023 and June 2024. In areas that are not accessible due to the fighting – where children are in most urgent need – the situation is likely even worse. Malnutrition among pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW)

FIG. 1 Numbers of IDPs in Sudan, mid-2023–mid-2024



Source: IOM, August 2024.

is also alarming, with screenings in Zamzam camp showing that over 33 percent are acutely malnourished.

Over the coming months, the nutrition situation in the Sudan will be influenced by several factors, including the ongoing rainfall season (which could induce floods leading to increased risk of water-borne diseases, and consequently more cases of acute malnutrition in localized areas) and the expansion of conflict. These factors will determine the extent of access for humanitarian assistance, with states receiving limited or no humanitarian assistance particularly affected, as their ability to deal with the increasing burden of disease and food insecurity, compounded by rising demand from the high number of IDPs, is constrained.

The world's largest internal displacement crisis

As of July 2024, about 7.9 million people had been internally displaced as a result of hostilities since April 2023 (IOM, July 2024).

Added to those displaced before the start of the conflict, this brings the total number of IDPs to about 10.7 million – making the Sudan the largest internal displacement crisis in the world.

Before the conflict, internal displacement was primarily concentrated in Darfur and Kordofan states. Now IDPs are reportedly displaced from 17 states of origin to all 18 states. Khartoum

represents the top state of origin, accounting for 36 percent of all IDPs in the country.

About 2.3 million people have also crossed borders into neighbouring countries since April 2023, bringing the total number of those displaced due to the conflict to 10.2 million (UNHCR, August 2024). With no end to the conflict in sight, amid limited resources and humanitarian access for actors to respond to the crisis, displacement in and out of the Sudan is projected to continue (UNHCR, April 2024), as is a deterioration in the food security and nutrition situation of those displaced.

A crisis beyond the country's borders

The cross-border impacts of the conflict continue as the Sudan's neighbours record surging refugee arrivals, the majority in Chad (36 percent), South Sudan (33 percent) and Egypt (23 percent) (IOM, July 2024). Even before the conflict, these countries were already grappling with other crises of their own, including high levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition, large numbers of displaced populations, conflict, political upheavals, and economic crises.

In South Sudan and Chad, critical services and resources in areas receiving and hosting refugees are overwhelmed, and humanitarian responses are at breaking point, resulting in increasingly

appalling living conditions. In South Sudan, returnees and refugee arrivals at transit centres face critical needs for food, health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene services, shelter, and protection (FSNWG, April 2024). This at a time when 56 percent of South Sudan's population is already experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. Around 28 000 or 10 percent of the returnee population in South Sudan were projected to face Catastrophe levels of acute food insecurity in April–July 2024 (IPC, November 2023).

Regarding acute malnutrition, Sudanese 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 2023 indicating that nearly 30 percent of children under 5 years old and a staggering 58 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) were acutely malnourished (UNHCR, 2024).

This situation was also extremely concerning in Chad, where MUAC screenings at border points indicated 29 percent of children aged under 5, and 11 percent of PBW were acutely malnourished. Large proportions of the newly arrived refugee and returnee populations in Eastern Chad are acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance, reaching 44 percent of the newly arrived refugees in Ouaddai in June–August 2024 (CH, April 2024).

At border crossing points of the Central African Republic, 17 percent of children under 5 years were acutely malnourished. In Ethiopia, the acute malnutrition situation was relatively better but still above the High WHO threshold, at 12 percent for children and 13 percent for PBW (UNHCR, 2024).