

Two years of war in Sudan: An updated picture of the humanitarian impact

April 2025 | SUDAN

KEY MESSAGES

- Two years into the conflict, Sudan is now one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.** Needs have escalated dramatically, driven by the collapse of infrastructure, eroded coping capacities, and widespread displacement. The country was already fragile before April 2023, but since then, the crisis' scale and severity has surged. Half the population is now acutely food insecure, **with famine being declared in parts of North Darfur and the Western Nuba Mountains**, while many other areas are at risk of famine.
- Despite urgent needs, the humanitarian response remains severely constrained.** Funding shortfalls and access barriers prevent aid from reaching many of the worst-affected areas. Bureaucratic hurdles, looting, ongoing violence, and attacks on aid workers and infrastructure continue to block life-saving assistance. These restrictions also limit data collection, obscuring the full scale and severity of needs and driving an **increasing risk of missing pockets of catastrophic needs** due to the inability to collect data. Recent global funding cuts, including by the US, threaten to further curtail life-saving operations and **roll back hard-won progress, particularly in terms of support to grassroots humanitarian efforts.**
- Sudan's conflict increasingly threatens regional stability.** Cross-border trade, mobility, and economic ties have been disrupted, fuelling tensions in and among already fragile neighbouring countries. Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, and Libya are each hosting large numbers of Sudanese refugees in increasingly protracted contexts, placing mounting pressure on limited resources. In South Sudan's Upper Nile State, historical ties to armed actors in Sudan and porous borders have heightened the risk of escalatory spillover violence, additional displacement, and disease transmission.

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Fighting broke out in Khartoum on the 15th of April 2023, and spread across the country. The conflict has triggered widespread displacement, destroyed critical infrastructure, and has launched the country into severe food insecurity, with [ongoing famine](#) in parts of the country.

100 days into the conflict, [IMPACT Initiatives produced an overview of the humanitarian impact](#). At the 2-year mark, this brief provides an update of the situation. Findings are based on a structured review of primary and secondary data.

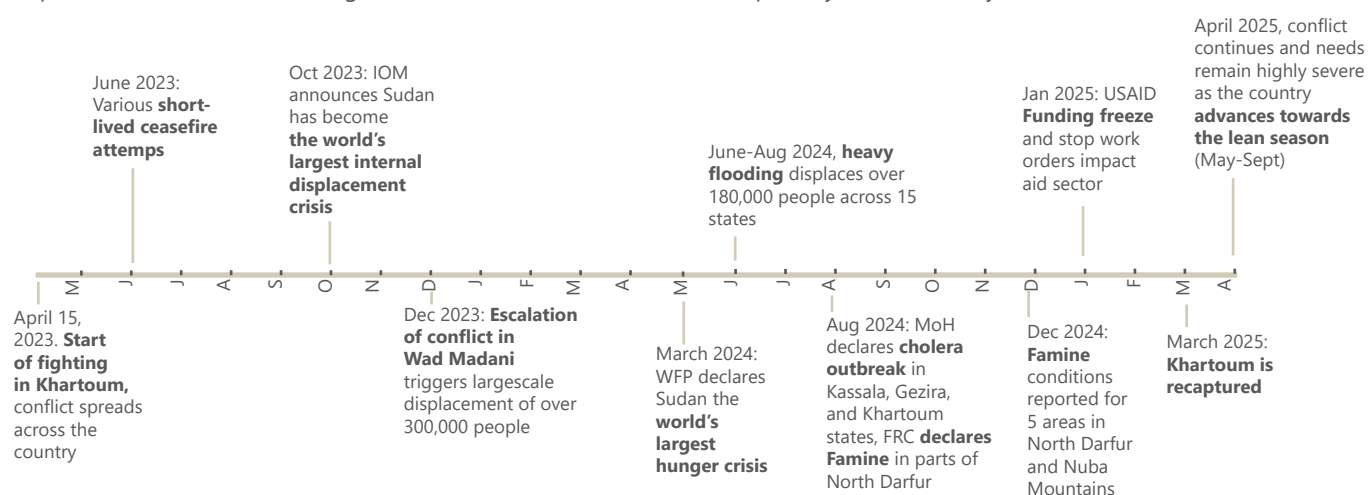


Figure 1: Timeline of 2 year of conflict in Sudan

After two years of conflict, Sudan is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises

Widespread displacement and a further breakdown of systems

As of early 2025, nearly one in three people in Sudan have been displaced at least once. Over 11 million are displaced within the country - the highest number globally - and more than 3 million have fled across borders (figure 2). Most have lost their livelihoods and now rely heavily on overstretched community networks or humanitarian aid.

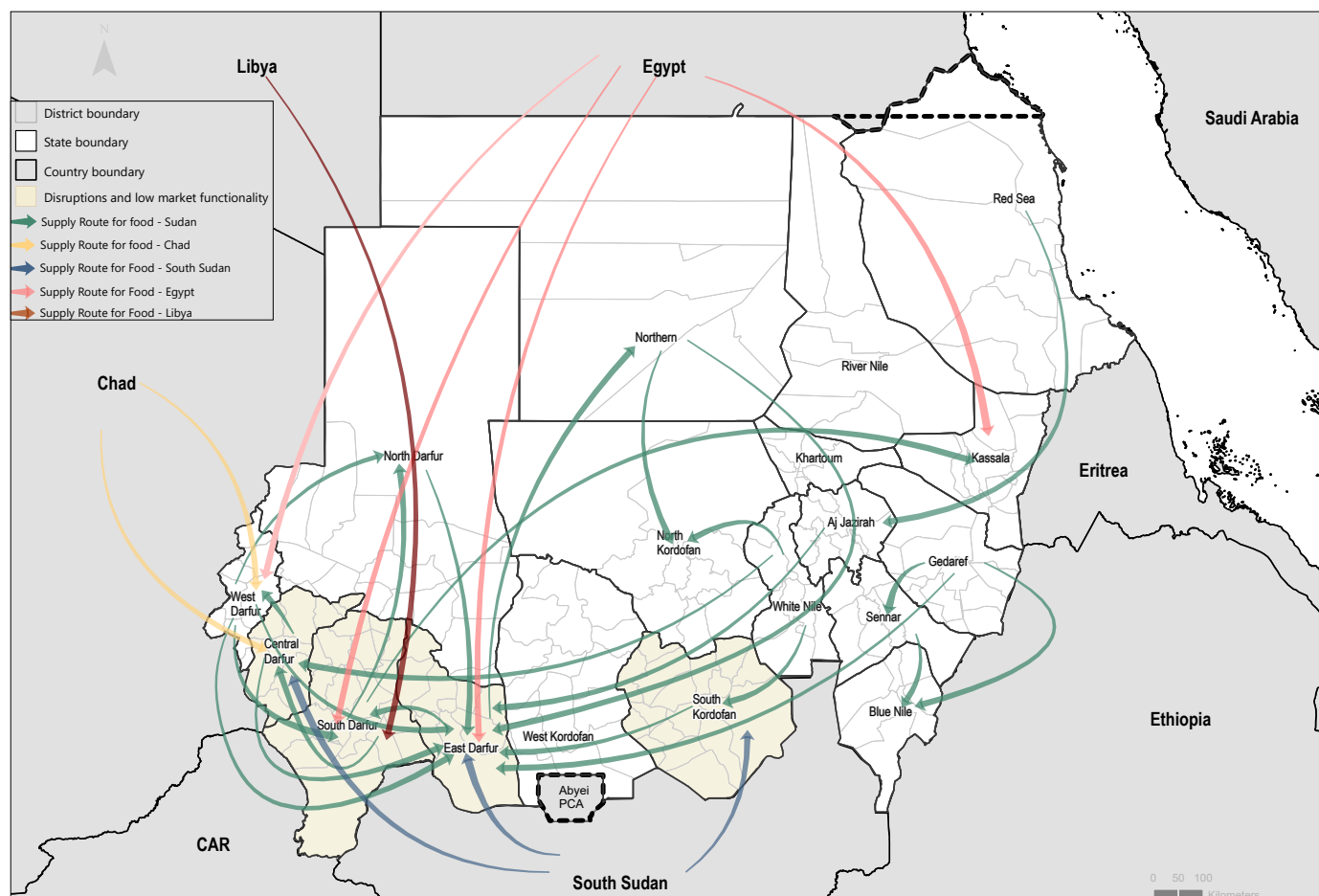
Critical infrastructure has been severely damaged, especially in conflict hotspots in the Darfur and Kordofan states, Khartoum, and Aj Jazirah. Roads, hospitals, water systems, dams, power lines, and markets have been damaged or destroyed, with limited opportunities for reconstruction. In conflict zones, an estimated **80% of hospitals** are non-functional, while those that remain open face extreme shortages of staff and supplies. A **January 2025 assessment** by IMPACT and partners in Central Darfur found that non-functional facilities, unaffordable care, and lack of medicines were the main barriers to healthcare access — triangulating narratives from other areas across the country.

The convergence of mass displacement, economic collapse, and breakdowns in essential services has

left communities with little capacity to absorb further shocks. In August 2024, **famine was declared** in parts of North Darfur, including Zamzam camp near El Fasher. By December, **famine conditions had spread to at least five areas** in North Darfur and the Western Nuba Mountains. Though harvests likely offered some short-term relief in less affected areas, insecurity along trade routes, **poor yields**, and damaged supply lines prevent food from reaching many markets — especially those in isolated and conflict-locked areas. **Nationwide liquidity shortages**, exacerbated by the banknote replacement in December 2024, negatively **impacted cash and voucher assistance** and further constrained access to markets in recent months. In some conflict areas, use of these new banknotes is **reportedly criminalised**, leading to financial exclusion further **restricting access to food and other critical items in some areas.**

Reflecting these dynamics, **cereal prices remained atypically high**, making food largely unaffordable for many. Data from the **Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)** shows that **market functionality, meanwhile, remains consistently compromised** by financial and security barriers, particularly in the Darfur states and South Kordofan (see map 1).

Analysts project that famine conditions will spread to at least ten areas by May 2025, ahead of the lean season.



Map 1: National and cross-border supply routes for key food items reported by vendors interviewed by the JMMI in 2024 (aggregated responses). Assessed markets in South, Central, and East Darfur, as well as South Kordofan most often recorded low market functionality due to supply disruptions.

A growing health and nutrition emergency

The intersection of rising food insecurity, limited healthcare, and poor WASH services is driving **a rapidly worsening nutrition crisis, increasing the risk of non-traumatic loss of life**. While access constraints have prevented nutrition data collection in some of the most affected areas, global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates from assessed areas **commonly exceed the World Health Organisation (WHO) Emergency threshold** of 15%, with some areas registering values **above 30%**. **Outbreaks of infectious diseases** — including a major cholera outbreak across 10 states in early 2025 — **are compounding these risks**, particularly among children suffering from acute malnutrition, who are greater risk of illness.

Acute malnutrition and disease outbreaks are likely to increase significantly in the coming months, when the traditional lean season (when food insecurity is at its seasonal peak) and the rainy season (when the risk of diseases grows) are expected to begin across the country.

Persistent access constraints and recent funding cuts curtail the response at a critical time

Access restrictions and funding cuts cripple humanitarian response

Sudan remains one of the crises with the highest humanitarian access constraints. Insecurity on key roads and in operational areas, targeted attacks on aid workers and infrastructure, and widespread looting have repeatedly disrupted humanitarian operations - especially in active conflict zones. Bureaucratic delays and restrictions continue to block access to communities across the country. **The upcoming rainy season**, expected to begin in June, will **further limit movement into lower-lying areas**. In April 2025, **WFP warned** that these access constraints are already preventing critical pre-positioning of food supplies, leaving millions of vulnerable communities at risk of being cut off from assistance during the rainy season.

Access constraints have left the vast majority of people in need of assistance without support. In February 2025, only **4 of the 30 million people** identified as in need had received some form of humanitarian assistance, according to OCHA.

The situation is especially dire in conflict-isolated hotspots like North Darfur and the Nuba Mountains in Kordofan, where humanitarian access has remained minimal throughout the two-year conflict. These areas also face some of the most severe needs, yet they have received only limited aid. Critically, the gap between the number of people targeted for assistance and those reached with assistance is the biggest for people facing the highest severity of needs; according to OCHA, **only 19% of people facing “catastrophic” needs had received assistance in February**.

Severe reductions in funding and financial insecurity among organisations as a result of **the USAID stop-work orders in January 2025 have aggravated existing challenges**. According to the Sudan Health Cluster, for instance, the freeze of US funding has affected at least **335 health facilities** across the country, significantly increasing health risks.

Critical local lifelines are at risk

Recent foreign aid cuts have reportedly shashed resources for grassroots networks — including emergency response rooms and community kitchens — **by up to 80%**. Many of these initiatives are the only sources of aid in areas unreachable by international organisations.

These community-led efforts, often operating on the frontlines of the response, **initially relied almost exclusively on local and diaspora funding**. But as the conflict devastated the economy and strained communities across the country, international donors had started increasing and formalising support to these local groups. USAID, in particular, played a key role by providing flexible cash transfers to emergency response rooms.

The sudden loss of this funding has forced widespread shutdowns of community kitchens in some of the hardest-hit and hardest-to-reach areas. With the lean season approaching, the closures **threaten to accelerate the spread of famine conditions** and deepen the crisis for communities already at the brink.



The conflict in Sudan continues to severely impact humanitarian conditions in neighbouring countries

The conflict is also fueling severe humanitarian fallout across Sudan's borders. In addition to the 11 million people displaced inside Sudan, more than 3 million have fled to neighbouring countries — particularly Egypt, South Sudan, and Chad (see figure 2). Many crossed through informal or unguarded border points and remain unregistered, making it difficult to fully assess their numbers and conditions. Still, the impact on already fragile host communities is clear: overstretched resources and strained public services are under mounting pressure.

Geopolitical tensions, meanwhile, have been rising in recent weeks, particularly with Chad and South Sudan, raising the risk of broader regional escalation.

Figure 2: Estimated number of individuals who crossed into neighbouring countries from Sudan as of 15 April ([IOM-DTM](#)).

Zoom-in: Escalation in South Sudan

The risk of spillover is perhaps most acutely felt in South Sudan, which has deep historical, cultural, and economic ties with Sudan. [Within the first 100 days](#) of the conflict in Sudan, sharp rises in the price of South Sudan's Multi-Sectoral Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (MSSMEB), signaled growing economic pressure. Since then, [price surges for critical food and non-food items continued](#), while trade disruptions have slashed income opportunities in border communities. Acute food insecurity — already widespread before the conflict — has now reached [levels not seen since South Sudan's civil war in 2018](#), particularly in [areas hosting large numbers of refugees and returnees](#). while trade disruptions have slashed income opportunities in border communities. Acute food insecurity — already widespread before the conflict — has now reached [levels not seen since South Sudan's civil war in 2018](#), particularly in [areas hosting large numbers of refugees and returnees](#).

The vast majority of registered arrivals from Sudan have [entered South Sudan through Upper Nile State](#) (UNS), where tens of thousands remain stranded in overcrowded sites or informal settlements. [WASH, health, and nutrition services remain severely limited, compounding already dire conditions](#). In September 2024, a cholera outbreak was reported in Renk, the main reception site in UNS. [The outbreak quickly spread throughout the country](#). Foreign aid cuts have reportedly severely [constrained humanitarian organisations responding to the outbreak](#), resulting in [forced closure of health facilities](#) in affected areas.

In early 2025, growing pressures combined with political instability, triggering escalatory armed clashes and mass displacement along the Sobat River Corridor and across the border into Ethiopia, [where cholera has also been spreading](#). These developments underscore how Sudan's conflict is destabilising South Sudan's fragile peace and [signal increased risk of further escalation of conflict impacting the region](#).

In conclusion: A deepening crisis and a response challenged by access constraints and a lack of data.

Two years into Sudan's war, the severity of needs continues to deepen within the country and across its borders — yet access remains constrained and funding is dwindling. With the lean season approaching and funding cuts forcing lifesaving operations to scale back, millions remain rapped in areas that humanitarians struggle to reach. Meanwhile, the inability to collect crisis-wide data likely obscures the true extent of needs, — especially in conflict-isolated and famine-affected areas — making effective coordination and prioritisation even more difficult.

Without urgent, sustained support and increased diplomatic pressure to end the war, there is a real risk that people facing the most acute, life-threatening needs will slip further from view and out of reach.

ABOUT IMPACT

IMPACT Initiatives is a Geneva based think-and-do-tank, created in 2010. IMPACT is a member of the ACTED Group.

IMPACT's teams implement assessment, monitoring & evaluation and organisational capacity-building programmes in direct partnership with aid actors or through its inter-agency initiatives, REACH and Agora. Headquartered in Geneva, IMPACT has an established field presence in over 15 countries. IMPACT's team is composed of over 300 staff, including 60 full-time international experts, as well as a roster of consultants, who are currently implementing over 50 programmes across Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Central and South-East Asia, and Eastern Europe.