

CRISIS OVERVIEW

Sudan is experiencing a severe, multifaceted crisis, with intensified conflict, economic turmoil, and disrupted agricultural production as its main drivers. The conflict, which has spread across multiple regions, has severely restricted movement, disrupted markets, and hindered humanitarian access (IPC 27/06/2024). Looting by armed groups, particularly the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has aggravated food shortages by depleting markets and redirecting humanitarian aid. These actions have caused the prices of essential goods to skyrocket, making them inaccessible for many (HRW 12/04/2024).

The economic impact of the conflict has been overwhelming, with critical sectors damaged, exports halted, and the national currency significantly devalued. Inflation has surged, making basic commodities unaffordable. The banking sector is in crisis, leading to cash shortages and further limiting people's ability to purchase food. The lack of foreign exchange reserves has compounded these issues, disrupting the import of essential goods (UNICEF 15/12/2023).

The conflict has also severely affected agricultural production, a cornerstone of Sudan's economy. Infrastructure destruction and farmer displacement have led to a significant drop in food production. Key agricultural areas have seen drastic reductions in cereal output, with some regions experiencing near-total crop failures (FAO 20/03/2024). The upcoming rainy season is likely to introduce additional challenges, such as flooding and pest infestations, further threatening food security (FAO 15/04/2024).

Displacement has aggravated the crisis, with IDPs struggling to access food and basic services. Malnutrition rates are expected to rise, particularly among children, owing to inadequate food intake and the spread of waterborne diseases, such as cholera and malaria, during the rainy season (Nutrition Cluster 06/05/2024).

Compounding these issues are significant barriers to humanitarian aid delivery. Conflict-related violence, looting, and restricted access have severely hampered relief efforts. Logistical challenges and the displacement of aid workers have further impeded the transportation of medical and nutritional supplies (KII 29/07/2024).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Methodology

This report is based on an analysis of approximately 50 publicly available sources, including documents produced by international organisations, UN agencies, research institutes, and local and international media. The sources selected provide information on the current food security crisis that supports our analysis of its drivers and vulnerabilities. We also conducted a key informant interview with a national response specialist to fill some of the information gaps identified during the secondary data review process.

Aim of the report

This report aims to highlight the food security situation in Sudan, focusing on the drivers of the crisis to analyse how it developed. It also aims to identify vulnerabilities among the affected populations to potentially target and prioritise aid.

Limitations

- This report does not exhaust the list of drivers and vulnerable populations.
- The report does not cover the entirety of Sudan and focuses on the states that food insecurity affects the most.
- This report was developed before the release of the findings of the Famine Review Committee, which found that IPC Phase 5 (Famine) conditions are currently present in Zamzam camp near El Fasher town and are likely to persist until the end of October.

CRISIS DRIVERS

Intensified conflict and obstruction by armed groups

Intensified conflict and insecurity have created a complex food security crisis, affecting millions across the country. Movement restrictions, market and service limitations, disruptions to agricultural production and livelihoods, and humanitarian access constraints characterise the situation. Originally centred in Central Darfur, Khartoum, and West Darfur, the conflict has spread to encompass Aj Jazirah, North Darfur, South and West Kordofan, and portions of Sennar and Blue Nile (IPC 27/06/2024). In Darfur, Khartoum, and Kordofan, intense fighting has persisted without relief for over a year (UN SC 20/03/2024).

Widespread looting has severely impeded food access, ravaging markets and depleting food supplies. The RSF have been accused of repeatedly attacking and looting humanitarian aid in areas under their control, including a WFP warehouse in Aj Jazirah state that held a month's worth of food for 1.5 million people (HRW 12/04/2024; Sudan Tribune 27/03/2024). The RSF have also participated in looting vehicles, including some that were delivering humanitarian aid (ACJPS 09/01/2024).

Disrupted trade routes to conflict-affected areas have further worsened the scarcity of essential supplies, such as seeds, fertilisers, insecticides, and fuel, leading to soaring market prices (FAO 15/04/2024; GFRC 14/09/2023). Notably, in Aj Jazirah state – Sudan's agricultural heartland – the conflict that erupted in December 2023 has displaced farmers, jeopardising crop production and food security in 2024 (FAO 15/04/2024).

Armed groups have also targeted agricultural infrastructure. In Sennar state, for instance, the RSF have seized agricultural equipment, seeds, and fertilisers from local villages, potentially derailing the upcoming agricultural season. Reports have surfaced of the RSF employing coercive tactics, including intimidation, beatings, and killings, to seize tractors and equipment in Ad Dinder locality. Instances of the looting of seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides from villages and storage facilities further threaten future harvests (Sudan Tribune 14/07/2024).

In Melit, North Darfur, the RSF has imposed new fees and obstacles along trade routes, particularly from Libya, further increasing prices for essential commodities. By setting up toll gates at security checkpoints, the RSF impose illegal fees on trucks transporting crucial supplies, such as food and medicine, both for humanitarian aid and the private market. The RSF then redirect the revenue from these levies, mainly towards security needs, a practice that not only drives up commodity prices across Darfur but also limits access to vital goods, worsening the region's humanitarian crisis (STPT 02/05/2024).

Economic crisis

The conflict has brought Sudan's economy to the brink of paralysis, marked by severely damaged sectors; halted exports, including gold, meat, peanuts and sesame; a significantly devalued national currency; and sharply declining public revenues (The EastAfrican 08/03/2024; Reuters 12/05/2023). The foreign exchange market has become highly unstable, with a noticeable reduction in foreign exchange supply after an 80% decline in gold exports in 2023 compared to the previous year. This decrease, coupled with a heightened demand for imported goods (such as food, medicine, and fuel), has aggravated the foreign exchange crisis. The Central Bank of Sudan's struggle to maintain adequate international reserves has further strained the situation. Logistical failures, infrastructure destruction (including the breakdown of the bank payment system), and the cessation of major sea and air freight operations – including in the Khartoum International Airport, which remains out of operation – have disrupted the movement of goods (UNICEF 15/12/2023).

The conflict has also severely affected Sudan's banking sector, precipitating a significant crisis. Limited or no access to banking services has led to widespread cash shortages throughout the country, with people mostly relying on remittances, which have greatly increased during the conflict. Sudanese citizens, grappling with a cash crunch, are finding it increasingly difficult to purchase essential goods – including food – amid skyrocketing inflation. The prices of staple grains are projected to rise by 200% compared to 2023 following the recent poor harvest (WFP accessed 02/07/2024; Siddig et al. 28/08/2023; WFP 15/04/2024). This could further affect people's food access, leaving them at risk of adopting coping mechanisms with potentially harmful consequences.

Nearly half of Sudan's population is unemployed, and according to the Sudan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the war in the country has displaced over 1.8 million workers and employees from their jobs (The EastAfrican 08/03/2024; Radio Tamazuj 22/05/2024). IMF data also indicates that Sudan's inflation rate had surged to 145.5% by April 2024, marking an annual percentage change of 114.6% (IMF accessed 30/07/2024).

Sudan has witnessed substantial food price hikes, with the prices of key commodities rising by 130–296% in areas such as Al Fasher compared to the five-year average in May 2024. One contributing factor is the disruption of market functionality, particularly in urban centres, including Aj Jazirah, Khartoum, and North Darfur (IPC 27/06/2024).

Informal cross-border flows of fuel and certain food commodities persist, with items such as flour, high-energy biscuits, and sugar coming from the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, and South Sudan. These flows are limited in quantity, however, and prices remain prohibitively high, largely as a result of high transportation costs and additional security risks (FEWS NET 13/06/2024).

This will result in even more severe food shortages during the lean season. In Aj Jazirah, food prices remain extremely high, and purchasing power continues to decline. There are reports of people's inability to afford food in the markets leading to expiration (Nutrition Cluster 06/05/2024).

Below-average agricultural production

Sudan's economy relies heavily on agriculture, which employs approximately 65% of its population. Food production in the country declined by 46% in 2023, making Sudan increasingly reliant on imported food (The Guardian 24/04/2024).

The conflict has severely curtailed agricultural production and inflicted damage on crucial infrastructure and livelihoods. The 2024 Crop and Food Supply Assessment Report on Sudan highlights significant declines in cereal production, particularly in the greater Kordofan and Darfur regions, where conflict is most intense. Cereal output in these areas has plummeted to as much as 80% below average, with West Darfur state experiencing a complete failure of the crop season because widespread insecurity has prevented farmers from accessing their fields (FAO 20/03/2024).

The emergence of plant pests and diseases, including a desert locust outbreak in northern Sudan, poses a significant threat. Concurrently, the conflict has severely damaged the national veterinary infrastructure, causing a near-total collapse of veterinary services and a severe vaccine shortage. Without proper treatment and disease control, the health of animals – and potentially humans – is at serious risk of diseases spreading unchecked (FAO 15/04/2024).

In North Darfur, the available food in markets is insufficient in both quantity and quality to meet the demand, likely affecting people's diet quality, especially for women and young children (Nutrition Cluster 06/05/2024). The conflict has restricted farmland access, hindered livestock movement, and destroyed critical infrastructure, disrupting the production of staple grains such as sorghum and millet.

Frequent violent clashes in Sudan's economic centre, Khartoum, have brought the majority of the country's agriprocessing operations to a standstill, as these activities (agrifood processing and food manufacturing) are concentrated in this area (IFPRI 15/12/2023). Khartoum also saw a decline in average vegetation levels in 2023, which worsened as the season progressed. The presence or occupation of armed groups, nearby violent conflicts, a shortage of agricultural inputs, and a drop in demand have all disrupted both small-scale and commercial agricultural activities (Mercy Corps 16/10/2023).

In Blue Nile state, agricultural production faces challenges from shortages of inputs, such as seeds and agricultural financing, compounded by conflict and the potential impacts of displacement, limited humanitarian access, flooding, and pest outbreaks (Mercy Corps 20/03/2024).

Restricted access

Hostilities and other factors – including attacks on humanitarian workers, limited commitment from warring parties to ensure access, incidents of looting, and the breakdown of civil order and law enforcement – have severely constrained crossline deliveries in Sudan. Since the conflict's onset, more than 1,000 incidents restricting humanitarian access have been documented, with 71% attributed to conflict-related violence against humanitarian assets or personnel and 21% stemming from the obstruction of humanitarian assistance (SCR 19/03/2024). Both the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have been accused of aid diversion and weaponising food to starve civilians (OHCHR 26/06/2024; TNH 29/06/2023).

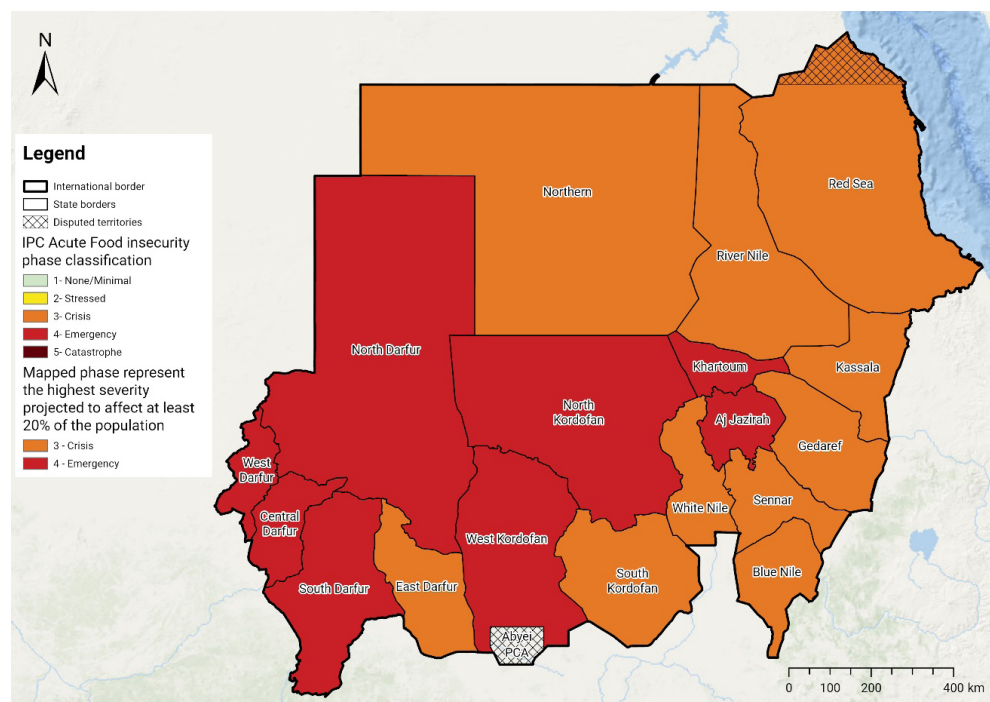
Cross-border access is still under negotiation, with many supplies stuck in Chad and unable to reach the affected population in Sudan. Aid from Port Sudan also cannot be transported to conflict-affected states, such as Aj Jazirah, Darfur, and Khartoum (KII 29/07/2024).

Both sides of the conflict have restricted aid delivery, access, and distribution (HRW 15/03/2024). The SAF have banned cross-border humanitarian aid from Chad and have been blocking assistance from reaching communities in RSF-controlled areas (US DOS 23/02/2024). Humanitarian organisations face numerous obstruction challenges, such as delays, arbitrary movement restrictions, harassment, and outright bans on certain supplies, including surgical supplies (HRW 15/03/2024; MSF 14/11/2023). By March 2024, 90% of the people experiencing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of hunger in Sudan were located in areas largely inaccessible to the WFP, notably in Darfur, Khartoum, and Kordofan (WFP 06/03/2024; AP 20/03/2024). In Darfur, WFP resumed food deliveries to approximately 250,000 people facing acute hunger in late March after a prolonged hiatus (WFP 05/04/2024). It is unclear how long the region had gone without aid.

In the greater Kordofan region, insecurity and roadblocks continue to severely restrict access, particularly in North and South Kordofan. These obstacles complicate the transportation of medical and nutritional supplies and hinder efforts to replenish markets with essential food commodities. In North Kordofan, where goods from Khartoum traditionally arrive, insecurity and roadblocks have led to escalating food prices and mounting shortages of basic goods. The interlocal transportation of food and goods remains extremely challenging, raising concerns about food accessibility and affordability, especially in remote areas (Nutrition Cluster 06/05/2024).

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Map 1. Projected IPC phase for June–September 2024



Source: ACAPS using data from IPC (27/06/2024)

Impacts on food availability

The conflict is expected to severely disrupt food availability. Economic shocks and conflict-related disruptions are likely to continue affecting food production and trade. Key trade hubs, such as Darfur, Khartoum, and Kordofan, will continue to face market breakdowns, increased inflation, and reduced food production. Disruptions in key trade hubs are anticipated to worsen food shortages and drive up prices, particularly in conflict zones (IFPRI 01/07/2024). The anticipated rainy season, from July–September, is expected to spread pests and plant diseases, further compromising agricultural productivity (IPC 27/06/2024). The flooding and rainy season – including localised flooding and its impact on transportation and infrastructure – may worsen food availability issues.

Impacts on the population

Between June–September 2024, over 25 million people in Sudan are anticipated to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse conditions. This figure includes around 755,000 people facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) and 8.5 million people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) conditions (IPC 27/06/2024). Displacement as a result of the conflict is expected to continue, affecting densely populated southeastern states such as Gedaref, Kassala, Sennar, and White Nile. IDPs and those in contested urban areas will likely face a heightened risk of violence and difficulties in accessing basic needs and humanitarian aid (IFPRI 01/07/2024). IDPs, who already face challenges in securing food and continuing agricultural activities, will likely struggle with increasing resource scarcity and disruptions to their livelihoods (Nutrition Cluster 06/05/2024).

Increased risk of malnutrition

The anticipated rise in food insecurity is expected to significantly worsen malnutrition rates. Approximately four million children were acutely malnourished by mid-2024, with an estimated 730,000 suffering from severe acute malnutrition (UNICEF 22/05/2024). The imminent rainy season will likely lead to an increased incidence of waterborne diseases, such as cholera and malaria, further affecting nutritional status (KII 29/07/2024). Areas already facing extreme malnutrition levels – such as Central Darfur, with 15.6% of children acutely malnourished – are expected to see further increases in malnutrition rates (WHO 30/05/2024; IPC 27/06/2024). The malnutrition level is considered critical in areas where between 15–29.9% of children are acutely malnourished (IPC accessed 29/07/2024).

Malnutrition in children can lead to increased mortality, developmental delays, and disrupted education, pushing many into potentially harmful coping mechanisms and further worsening vulnerabilities (WVI 27/06/2024).

COPING STRATEGIES

In response to food shortages, potentially harmful coping strategies, such as reducing meal portions and limiting the number of daily meals, are expected to continue (IFPRI/WFP 20/06/2024). IDPs and rural populations are likely to rely on minimal resources, intensifying their vulnerability.

Because of the conflict and lack of resources, many displaced individuals are anticipated to face challenges in planting crops or securing food, leading to further food insecurity and reliance on aid (Nutrition Cluster 06/05/2024). Rural households, already facing significant disparities in housing and access to services, are expected to continue experiencing high levels of food insecurity (IFPRI 12/04/2024).

Impacts on humanitarian response

Humanitarian operations will likely continue facing significant challenges from the conflict and resulting access issues. The displacement of aid workers will continue to hamper the delivery of aid. The transportation of medical supplies will likely continue to be challenging, with many responders shifting to external procurement, which is time-consuming and introduces logistical hurdles (KII 29/07/2024).