

Briefing Note – 6 July 2017

SUDAN

Conflict in Darfur



Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Urgent
Expected impact	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Major

Crisis overview

Conflict between the government and armed groups in Darfur has been ongoing since 2003. After a brief respite following a ceasefire in October 2016, fighting resumed as of April 2017. The government has renewed the ceasefire on 2 July for a further four months. The armed groups they are clashing with, the JEM and the SLM-MM, also signed a ceasefire agreement on 3 May. Despite these declarations, clashes occurred in both May and June, highlighting a lack of commitment to the ceasefire agreements on both sides. Government assertions about an improved security situation in the region is driving international measures such as the upcoming removal of economic sanctions against Sudan and the reduction of the UNAMID peacekeeping forces – a move that would leave vulnerable populations unmonitored and susceptible to violent attacks. Darfur hosts over 2.1 million IDPs, 121,300 refugees, and received a total of 250,000 returnees between 2014 and 2017. These populations remain vulnerable and will be greatly impacted by the deteriorating security situation in Darfur.

The crisis is further compounded by an AWD/cholera epidemic which has spread to Darfur as of 22 June, infecting 137 and killing 23 in one week. The ongoing rainy season will exacerbate the spread of infection as it has already resulted in damaged shelters and WASH infrastructure. Food security has also deteriorated in the region, with 58% of IDPs food insecure as of 31 May compared with 13% in May 2016.

Limitations: This report relies heavily on local sources due to a lack of international presence, restrictions on reporting on cholera, and limited access to certain areas and limited information coming from those areas.

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale

While clashes between the government and various opposing armed forces are sporadic as opposed to ongoing, they signify that the ceasefire is unlikely to hold. Coupled with the reduction of UNAMID forces and their decreased capacity to monitor events and protect civilians, direct and indirect attacks on civilians are likely to continue and increase.

High levels of malnutrition and food insecurity, as well as recent damage to WASH infrastructure resulting from the rainy season will likely contribute to the spread of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD)/cholera in the region.

Key priorities

- **Protection:** Direct violence against civilians is common in Darfur. Extra-judicial arrests, rape, indiscriminate bombing and torture continue to affect civilians.
- **Health:** Intervention is needed to combat the spread of the AWD/cholera epidemic which has affected East, South and North Darfur, infecting 137 and killing 23 as of 30 June.
- **Food:** 58% of IDPs and 78% of South Sudanese refugees are food insecure as of 31 May, despite this year's harvest being more productive than last year.

Humanitarian constraints

Political and security access constraints limit the movement of humanitarian workers in Darfur. The rainy season is underway until October and flooding will hamper the movement of humanitarian workers.

Affected groups	Darfur
Population in need	3,000,000
Returnees between 2014- 2017	250,000
Total IDPs	2,100,000
South Sudanese refugees	132,743
Total displaced	2,482,743

Sources: ACLED 28/06/2017, OCHA 01/04/2017 UNHCR 30/062017

Crisis impact

Conflict began in Darfur in 2003 and has persisted at fluctuating levels of violence over 14 years. More recently, violence subsided somewhat following a ceasefire in October 2016, only to flare again in April 2017. Clashes reignited initially in the Jebel Marra area between government militia and the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW), and again in North and East Darfur in May between the Rapid Support Force (RSF) on one side, and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement–Transitional Council (SLM-TC) on the other. (Sudan Tribune 26/04/2017)(Crisis Group 22/06/2017)

The region has 2.1 million IDPs and this recent fighting has caused further displacement: some 30,000 people have been displaced by the fighting in North Darfur in May, and 5,000 during the fighting in Jebel Marra (Acjps 22/06/2017). As of 2 July, a further 2,000 people have fled to Kassab camp fleeing violence in the Ein Siro area of North Darfur. There are reports of water and food shortages as well as protection concerns at the camp. (Dabanga 02/07/2017)

Despite the breach in the ceasefire, the government continues to cite the improved situation security in Darfur, encouraging the return of IDPs. 230,000 IDP returnees to Darfur were recorded from 2014-2016, and a further 20,000 as of April this year. (UNSC 14/06/2017)

Protection: Civilians are subjected to a wide range of abuses by all parties to the conflict. In the first two and a half months of 2017, 35 incidents of rape were reported and as of 30 June there are reports of the army attacking unarmed citizens, raiding houses and raping women in the Jebel Marra region. Some 277 civilians have been killed in 2017 so far. (Dabanga 21/04/2017) (Dabanga 30/06/2017) (ACLEDD 29/06/2017) Beyond displacing people, the clashes are presenting significant protection concerns. Fifteen villages in Jebel Marra were indiscriminately bombed by the Sudanese Air Force in April. Further aerial attacks occurred on 29 May. It is unclear if civilians were killed during these attacks. (Dabanga 23/04/2017, Dabanga 30/05/2017) As the government now controls large areas of Darfur, there is an emerging trend of people returning to their area of origin to find their land occupied by militiamen who fought alongside the government and are now being rewarded with grants of land that belongs to local people. This is likely to lead to further tensions. (Dabanga 17/04/2017)

Health: Cholera is spreading rapidly throughout Sudan after first appearing in Blue Nile state in August 2016. It has spread to Darfur as of 22 June. The government continues to refer to the outbreak as acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) and imposes sanctions

including arrest against those who reference cholera. (Dabanga 28/06/2017) The epidemic first spread to Naivasha camp for IDPs in North Darfur where it killed 12 and infected at least 95, as of 4 July, there are also reports of it having spread to Kabkabiya camp, North Darfur where 7 have died and 7 have been infected. (Dabanga 01/04/2017) It has since spread to East Darfur, including Kriu camp for South Sudanese refugees where 5 deaths and at least 100 infections were recorded as of 27 June, and Kalma camp in South Darfur where 6 have died and 32 are infected as of 29 June. (Dabanga 27/06/2017) (Dabanga 29/06/2017)

The conflict-related displacement and overcrowded camp conditions, combined with pre-existing poor malnutrition rates make people more susceptible to contracting cholera. In Jebel Marra the severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rate is 5.4%, which is above the 2% emergency threshold. Combined with low immunisation rates, with children as old as seven never having been vaccinated, the population is at risk of contracting disease and vulnerable to the cholera outbreak. (UNICEF 28/06/2017)

Food: The food security situation has deteriorated in Darfur, despite an improved harvest this year. The current situation is attributed to poor economic access to food, increased prices of essential foods, displacement, marginal livelihoods, and limited access to livelihoods. In Central Darfur, food insecurity rose from 32% in May 2016 to 70% in May 2017. This could be attributed to the displacement from Jebel Marra that occurred during this period. South Sudanese refugees in the region are most affected, with 78% food insecure. In particular, refugees in Al Lait camp in North Darfur and Kario camp in East Darfur, where 84% and 81% respectively are food insecure. (WFP 31/05/2017)

Vulnerable groups affected

There are 3.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 1.6 million are in 60 camps across Darfur. In total there are 2.1 million IDPs in Darfur and 121,300 South Sudanese refugees. (OCHA 01/04/2017). These populations are particularly vulnerable as they are more susceptible to contracting disease due to overcrowded camp conditions. There have also been reports of displaced people having to leave camps in Central Darfur due to lack of food. Unable to return to their homes because of continued insecurity, these population groups have increased vulnerability. (Dabanga 05/06/2017)

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Access of humanitarian actors to affected populations is hampered by both political and physical constraints. The government has banned access to conflict affected areas in Sudan including Darfur, resulting in a significant impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In 2016 the government adopted new regulations to ease movement to non-conflict areas but continues to restrict movement in conflict zones. The denial of access for peacekeeping forces to certain areas and the refusal to issue humanitarian visas has hampered the work of peacekeepers, leaving populations vulnerable to attack. (HRW 14/06/2017) Between 2009 and 2017 the number of aid workers dropped from 17,700 to just over 4,000, 97% of whom are national staff. (OCHA 01/04/2017) Sudan ranks 8th in the world in terms of danger to humanitarian workers. Between January 2016 and March 2017, 10 humanitarian workers were victim to various forms of attack. (HIU 14/04/2017)

The rainy season is underway and will continue until October. Roads may be damaged and make movement in the region more difficult.

Aggravating factors

Downsizing UNAMID

The Security Council on 29 June approved a proposal to reduce the presence of the hybrid United Nations-African Union mission (UNAMID) in Darfur. It will be implemented in two phases. The number of troops and police will be reduced from 13,000 troops and 3,150 police to 8,735 and 2,500 respectively at the end of phase two in June 2018. (UNSC 29/06/2017) The decision was based on UN/AU joint review findings that the security situation has improved and that there has been no new displacement in 2017. Recent events, as explained above, contradict this position. While hostilities were reduced between October 2016 and April 2017, clashes have resumed since. (Acjps 22/06/2017) The Sudan Democracy First group has expressed concern that the reduction will create an international vacuum in an area that remains unstable, potentially allowing radical groups to have an ease of movement and adding to international and regional instability. Eleven bases will be closed as part of the restructure, leaving citizens in these regions unprotected and vulnerable to unmonitored attacks, by government or militia forces. (Democracy First Group 26/06/2017)(UN 14/06/2017) (Allesastafrica 18/06/2017)

Lifting economic sanctions

By 12 July the US will decide whether to lift economic and trade sanctions on Sudan. The conditions for their removal were that Sudan would cooperate in counterterrorism, address the threat of the Lord's Resistance Army, end hostilities in Darfur and The Two Areas, improve humanitarian access, and end negative interference in South Sudan. Concerns have been raised by different actors that not lifting the sanctions may result in increased backing for hardliners who believe that Sudan should strive for outright military victory while it has an advantage over armed groups who are weakened and divided. Already there are reports of the government taking advantage of the recent factions in the SPLM-N in Blue Nile, with reported attacks as of 26 June. (Sudan Tribune 27/06/2017) (Dabanga 25/06/2017) (Crisisgroup 22/06/2017).

Contextual information

History of conflict

Violence began in 2003 when armed groups retaliated against perceived economic and political marginalisation of Darfur. The two main groups were the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), which in 2006 split into two factions, the SLM-AW, and the SLM-MM, and the other was the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). In 2008 UNAMID was sent to the region as a peacekeeping force. Shortly afterwards, in 2009, following the issuance of an arrest warrant for senior leaders in the Sudanese government, 13 INGOs and 3 NGOs had their licences revoked. Violence increased dramatically in 2014 following the launch of a government military operation to end the armed opposition in Darfur. The level of violence subsided greatly in October 2016 following the signing of a unilateral ceasefire however, since April, the number of armed attack are on the rise again. (BBC 10/01/2017) (Worldwithoutgenocide 30/06/2017) (Reuters 31/07/2014)

Two peace agreements have been signed, the Darfur Peace Agreement of 2006 and the Doha Document of Peace in Darfur (DDPD) in 2011. The rebel groups did not agree to either. While the government still wants to use the DDPD as the framework for any peace agreement, the rebel groups reject this and claim it is too favourable towards the government. (ISS 24/04/2017)

Stakeholders

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM): Established in 2003, this is Darfur's largest armed group. They rejected the Darfur Peace agreement of 2006 and are willing to engage in peace talks.

Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minawi (SLM-MM): They split from the SLM and signed the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006. They are currently willing to engage in peace talks, yet as of 19 May they have accused the government of preparing for a full-scale war against them. (Dabanga 19/05/2017)

The Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid Al Nur (SLM-AW): The SLM-AW split from the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) in 2006. They did not sign the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006. They control territory in Jebel Marra. They refuse to participate in peace talks under the framework of the Doha agreement and they say that any negotiation must be preceded by security in the region

Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF): The SRF is an alliance of Darfur's three main armed groups. The JEM, the SLM-MM and the SLM-AW.

Government of Sudan: The government is led by the National Congress Party (NCP). In June 2015 President al-Bashir appointed a new cabinet, following his April election victory. (The Economist 01/12/2016)

Pro Government forces: The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) are the government forces of Sudan. The Rapid Support Force (RSF) has its roots in the Janjaweed militia and was officially established in 2013. (AllAfrica 18/01/2017)

Key characteristics

- **Demographic profile:** The population of Darfur is estimated to be around 7.5 million people, (UNCHR 2012) three million of whom need humanitarian assistance. There are an estimated 2.1 million IDPs and 140,000 refugees in need of humanitarian assistance. (HNO 2017)
- **WASH:** In 18 of the 60 IDP camps in Darfur people have access to less than 7.5L of water per person per day. Water shortages are common and are particularly prevalent in IDP camps where high-density populations increase the rate of water extraction and the subsequently the frequency of water system breakdowns. (HNO 2017)
- **Key health statistics:** The under-5 mortality rate in Darfur is 104 per 1,000 live births. The maternal mortality rate 1,142 per 100,000 live births. (UNCHR 2012)

- **Food insecurity:** Food security deteriorated among protracted IDP households in most regions of Darfur between May 2016 and May 2017. Food insecurity levels rose from 33% to 52% in North Darfur; from 43% to 66% in West Darfur; 32% to 70% in Central Darfur; 46% to 63% in South Darfur and in East Darfur they dropped from 58% to 52%. Food insecurity among South Sudanese in Darfur is significantly higher, ranging from 71% to 84%. (WFP 31/05/2017)
- **Nutrition:** The SAM rate in the Jebel Marra area is 5.4% and GAM rate is 15.7%. Across Darfur malnutrition rates are high. In North Darfur GAM prevalence was recorded at 27.9% during the last assessment in 2014. (UNICEF 31/05/2017) (HNO 2017)
- **Literacy:** 59% of Sudan's population is literate. (WorldBank 2015)

Lessons learned

1. Lack of a timely humanitarian response was one of the core issues in Darfur in the past. Needs were visible prior to 2003, increased dramatically in that year and yet it was almost into the following year before response was mobilised. (ALNAP 2006) There were multiple reasons for this that are equally relevant to the conflict today:
 - The fast-evolving conflict, difficult terrain and frequency of new displacement made it difficult to establish the extent of the need.
 - Granting of visas to humanitarian staff was restricted and access was a problem, limiting information regarding what was happening on the ground.
 - The crisis was in competition with other high-profile emergencies.

In the past, these factors led to a misinterpretation of the severity of the crisis in Darfur initially. With the decreased presence of UNAMID and the recent flare up in fighting, humanitarians should be cautious to not dismiss the Darfur crisis again.

2. One of the distinguishing features of the Darfur crisis has been the perpetration of violence against women. Sexual violence was commonly used as a weapon of war and still is today. Humanitarian programming needs to incorporate protection as a cross-cutting issue across all programming as a matter of priority. There is a need to plan programmes with a clear protection strategy as a cross cutting issue in their response. (ALNAP 2006)

Map: Conflict and displacement in Darfur, Sudan 2017



Conflict and displacement in Darfur, Sudan in 2017

