

Children in crisis

UNICEF emergency response in Sudan and neighbouring countries

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Following weeks of tension between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), heavy fighting broke out in Khartoum on 15 April 2023 and extended throughout Sudan. The ongoing conflict is pushing already vulnerable children and women deeper into hardship. Thousands of families are fleeing Khartoum and other cities, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

Immediate humanitarian needs

The fighting is severely exacerbating the already fragile humanitarian situation in the country. Humanitarian needs had already reached record levels before hostilities broke, with 15.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 8.5 million children.

As of 2 May, at least 550 people have been killed and 4,926 wounded across Sudan according to Federal Ministry of Health figures. Over a hundred children have reportedly been killed and nearly two thousand injured across Khartoum, the Darfurs and North Kordofan, with increasing reports of gender-based violence (GBV) against girls and women. The security situation, however, seriously hinders the ability of UNICEF and partners to collect and verify information.

Safe access and provision of essential supplies is severely constrained across many parts of Sudan. Households are running low on food, fuel and cash, while prices of basic commodities have risen by 40 – 60 per cent in some areas. This increases the risk of malnutrition among children, water borne diseases, displacement and exposure to violence including GBV.

The safety and wellbeing of humanitarian workers and assets remain of grave concern. Five aid workers, including four UN staff members, have been killed. Humanitarian premises have come under attack and looted, including UNICEF supplies and properties.

Sudan already had one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. The fighting has disrupted lifesaving treatment services to about 50,000 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), including 1,700 children with medical complications. Access to health care is severely disrupted. Only 16 per cent of health facilities in Khartoum are currently operating as normal.

Fighting has compromised the central cold chain, including millions of lifesaving vaccines and vital medication such as insulin, with electricity supply unstable and limited access to fuel for running generators. Vaccines and cold chain equipment in West and South Darfur have been destroyed.

Access to safe drinking water remains a major challenge in conflict-affected areas, increasing the risk of water-borne diseases such as cholera. Several neighbourhoods in Khartoum face severe shortage of water due to power outage, lack of fuel and damage to water systems.

Schools and educational institutions in conflict affected areas are mostly closed. Out of school children are bound to increase in number and at greater risk of physical and mental threats, including recruitment into armed groups. The learning crisis is deepening as a result, with nearly 7 million school-age children already out of school before the conflict, one in three girls and one in four boys, with girls less likely to return to school.



On 19 April 2023, people flee their neighbourhoods amid fighting between the army and paramilitaries in Khartoum, Sudan.



On 27 April 2023, as conflict escalates in Sudan, a group of refugees, mostly women and children, rest under a tree to protect themselves from the high temperatures after crossing into the Chadian village of Koufroun, situated on the Chad-Sudan border.

Spill over to neighbouring countries

Big numbers of children and families are on the move trying to flee the violence – internally and across international borders. Asylum seekers from Sudan, returnees and refugees from neighbouring countries, and third country nationals are crossing daily to neighbouring states, with different protection and assistance needs, and some continuing to transit to other countries of destination. Displacement increases protection risks such as GBV, family separation, or mental health issues. Children and women are also reportedly waiting for days in various border crossings without adequate shelter, food or water and sanitation (WASH).

As of 1 May, according to UNHCR:

- 42,000 people crossed to Egypt.
- 30,000 people sought refuge in Chad.
- 27,275 people were registered entering South Sudan, including 20,932 South Sudanese returnees.
- 8,900 people arrived in Ethiopia, including 7,280 third country nationals.
- 9,700 people crossed to the Central African Republic (CAR).

Many communities receiving displaced populations are already affected by multiple emergencies. Basic services and humanitarian partners' capacity in these locations are overstretched. Chad, for example, is already hosting more than 600,000 refugees and the humanitarian appeal is only 3 per cent funded as of early May. Egypt currently hosts nine million migrants and refugees, with one million assessed as vulnerable. The situation is also expected to worsen in many of Sudan's neighbouring countries during the rainy season with floods and road closures increasing the risk of food insecurity and the spread of diseases such as cholera.



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On 1 May 2023, 28-year-old Alawia Mohammed Abaker holds her 3-month-old child Mutasim as they receive the second dose of life-saving polio, pentavalent, PCV, and Rota vaccines at Kenana Health Centre in Sudan.

Sudan response

UNICEF has been operating in Sudan for over seventy years and remains committed to delivering for children, especially the most vulnerable. An operational team has temporarily relocated to UNICEF's Port Sudan sub-office from where to continue to stage country-wide operations.

UNICEF estimates that at least an additional 5 million people, including 2.5 million children, will be in need of humanitarian assistance, on top of preexisting needs. Working with local partners, staff and communities on the ground, UNICEF will strive to ensure continuity of essential services for children in conflict hotspots. UNICEF interventions will also support the provision of urgent assistance to the newly displaced people and affected host communities in the states where conflict spread remains limited and with the largest number of internally displaced.

In coordination with other humanitarian partners, UNICEF will prioritize the following interventions for children:

- **Health:** UNICEF will continue to support primary healthcare centres and hospitals including by providing emergency health kits, essential supplies and medicines, such as to 5 primary healthcare centres and one stabilization centre in North Darfur. UNICEF will continue to work to secure the cold chain, including by providing fuel, to save millions of doses of vaccines and vital medications.
- **WASH:** UNICEF will focus on the provision of safe drinking water and restoring critical WASH services. In Khartoum, for example, UNICEF has provided WASH support to six hospitals in coordination with the Ministry of Health.
- **Nutrition:** UNICEF will prioritize continued treatment of children with SAM and will resume other nutrition activities such as mass screening and provision of maternal, infant and young child nutrition wherever security allows.
- **Child protection:** UNICEF will work with partners to respond to the growing protection concerns with a focus on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations on Child Rights. UNICEF will respond to identified cases, support family tracing and reunification as well as the case management of unaccompanied and separated children, and provide a minimum MHPSS package. GBV prevention and response services will also be prioritized.
- **Education:** UNICEF will support children to access schooling and other learning opportunities including the provision of prepositioned supplies to schools and of mental health and psychosocial support to children affected by the crisis and will establish safe and child-friendly learning spaces.
- **Humanitarian Cash Transfers:** UNICEF will build on the existing cash transfer programme to pregnant and lactating mothers in eastern Sudan to address the humanitarian needs of the IDP population.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Accountability to Affected Populations, and Disability Inclusion will also remain at the core of UNICEF's response. Throughout its interventions, UNICEF will leverage safe engagement with women-led organisations and young people.

Supplies and logistics: prepositioned supplies in UNICEF warehouses and government counterpart warehouses throughout the country allowed for an initial response, including the distribution of medical, WASH and nutrition supplies. However, the looting of some supplies, the security situation, fuel shortage and the targeting of large vehicles limit access to warehouses, as well as the dispatching and replenishing of supplies. With the main airport closed, air shipments have been diverted, and while sea shipments continue to Port Sudan for now, the situation remains volatile. UNICEF is actively exploring alternative entry points and ways of delivering to and within Sudan.



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On 29 April 2023, UNICEF and NGO Partner [Premiere Urgence Internationale](#) distribute essential emergency items to refugees from Sudan, including mats, blankets, cooking kits, mosquito nets, water containers, and soap in Koufroun, a Chadian village.

Refugee response

UNICEF's teams in neighbouring countries are working with host governments and partners to provide immediate lifesaving response as people arrive, including right at the border crossings, like in Argeen and Qustol in Egypt. UNICEF is supporting the set-up of essential services at reception and transit centers. UNICEF response includes:

- Provision of **safe water** through water trucking, water treatment, digging and repair of boreholes, sanitation facilities, hygiene items and NFI kits to meet refugees, returnees and host communities' needs.
- **Nutrition** services for children under five suffering from SAM in health centers and mobile clinics, and provision of nutrition supplies.
- Provision of health screening referrals, vaccination, essential drugs and medical kits to ensure access to **health care** and services benefiting both host and refugee populations.
- **Child Protection** and **GBV prevention** and response, including psychosocial support activities, child friendly spaces, case management and referral to specialised services, family tracing and reunification, and supporting the case management of unaccompanied and separated children and prevention of childhood statelessness.
- **Education** services to ensure refugee, returnee and host community children and adolescents can access inclusive, quality education and learning opportunities in safe and protective environments.

In addition to this immediate response, further need assessments are underway while pre-positioning of stocks is prioritized in areas where road access will soon be challenged by the rainy season. UNICEF and partners are preparing for an outflow of thousands of families across Sudan's borders, including:

- 350,000 people to Egypt's borders in the coming months, including 115,000 people in need.
- 100,000 refugees to Chad over a period of three months.
- 60,000 refugees and up to 180,000 South Sudanese returnees to South Sudan.
- Up to 25,000 people to CAR.
- New arrivals are also expected in Libya, and secondary movements to Somalia and Kenya.



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On 30 April 2023, 16-year-old Ikhrum, who was forced to flee her home in Sudan when her village was attacked and her house burnt down, sits in the shade of a tree, waiting for the distribution of non-food items by UNICEF and its partners in Kounfroun, Chad.

Funding needs

Humanitarian needs arising from the recent conflict inside Sudan, further to the preexisting 15.8 million and estimated additional 5 million people in need, will be thoroughly assessed as soon as the situation allows. The cost of running operations in Sudan will considerably increase due to access constraints and the new security reality on the ground.

Resource partners who wish to contribute to the UNICEF Sudan response can do so against the existing [2023 Sudan Humanitarian Action for Children \(HAC\)](#) appeal requiring US\$ 584.6 million - only 12 per cent funded as of end of April.

In terms of neighbouring countries, the requirements are still being defined based on current assessments on the ground, however partners can contribute towards the current 2023 HAC appeals which cover: [CAR](#), [Chad](#), [Egypt](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Libya](#) and [South Sudan](#).

For its response in Sudan and neighbouring countries, UNICEF is appealing for:

- **Rapid provision of flexible funding**, which is instrumental to ensuring life-saving WASH, health and nutrition, child protection, education and humanitarian cash support to vulnerable children, adolescents and families affected by the conflict.
- **Flexible, timely and unearmarked contributions**, which are critical to enable UNICEF to promptly respond to current and increasing humanitarian needs, and to ensure a principled response that is able to adapt based on emerging needs.

As the assessment of needs are made available, UNICEF HAC appeals for each response will be updated accordingly online: [Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal | UNICEF](#)

Without timely, flexible, resources, the most vulnerable and affected children, young people and families will suffer greater exposure to the impacts of the fighting in Sudan and limited access to critical services and protection.

For every child

Whoever she is.

Wherever he lives.

Every child deserves a childhood

A future.

A fair chance

That's why UNICEF is there.

For each and every child.

Working day in and day out.

In more than 190 countries and territories.

Reaching the hardest to reach.

The furthest from help.

The most excluded

It's why we stay to the end.

And never give up.