



GIEWS Update

The Republic of the Sudan Dramatic increase in acute food insecurity due to the ongoing conflict

Highlights

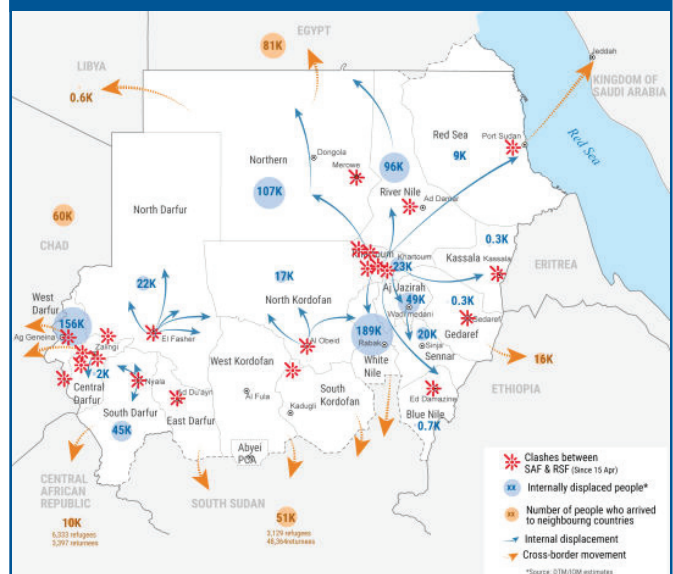
- The eruption of armed conflict in the country has severely affected the availability of, and access to, food, against a backdrop of persisting macroeconomic challenges and frequent episodes of intercommunal violence.
- The food security situation has dramatically worsened since the start of the conflict, with about 19.9 million people estimated to require emergency food and livelihood assistance during the June–September lean season.

The conflict

On 15 April 2023, fighting broke out between the Sudanese armed forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid support forces (RSF) in the capital, Khartoum, in the nearby town of Omdurman and in Merowe City in Northern State. The conflict subsequently spread to cities in other states, including Nyala (South Darfur), Al Fashir (North Darfur), El Obeid (North Kordofan) and Ag Geneina (West Darfur). With both warring parties heavily armed, the conflict is characterized by high intensity, which have resulted in the loss of civilian lives and in the destruction of private houses and assets as well as critical infrastructures, including hospitals and markets. In West Darfur State, the conflict has triggered intercommunal clashes, further intensifying the violence and its impact on the security and the livelihood activities of the local population.¹ The conflict has severely disrupted humanitarian operations, with frequent lootings of facilities and vehicles and targeting of humanitarian workers. A three-day ceasefire from 25 April 2023 facilitated the evacuation of foreign nationals and the flight of thousands of civilians. The extension agreed for another three days was not respected and hostilities resumed on 29 April. Representatives of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) signed on 20 May

an Agreement on a Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements. The ceasefire, which should enter into force 48 hours after the signing, shall remain in effect for seven days and may be extended with the agreement of both parties.

Map 1: The Sudan – Armed clashes, internally displaced, cross-border movements



Source: OCHA 2023. Sudan: Clashes between SAF and RSF - Flash Update No. 13. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). United States of America. 21 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-clashes-between-saf-and-rsf-flash-update-no-12-14-may-2023-enar>.

Insecurity and population displacements

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM),ⁱⁱ as of 16 May about 843 130 people have been displaced since the beginning of the conflict. Approximately 72 percent of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been displaced from Khartoum State, while 19 percent have been displaced from West Darfur State. In addition, 253 591 Sudanese and foreign nationals, including large numbers of refugees, have fled to South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Chad and the Central African Republic.

Before the beginning of the hostilities, about 3.7 million Sudanese people were internally displaced (80 percent of them located in Greater Darfur Region) and the country hosted 1.1 million refugees. The food security of IDPs is precarious and of particular concern. According to a rapid assessment conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)ⁱⁱⁱ in late April 2023, among the 3 500 Sudanese people that were displaced from Khartoum to Madani town, in Al Jazirah State, almost half of the respondents indicated to have an inadequate food consumption, 70 percent reported the extensive use of negative coping strategies (relying on less preferred and cheaper foods, limiting portion sizes and reducing the number of meals per day) and humanitarian assistance and/or donations were the main source of food for about 90 percent of them.

Food availability

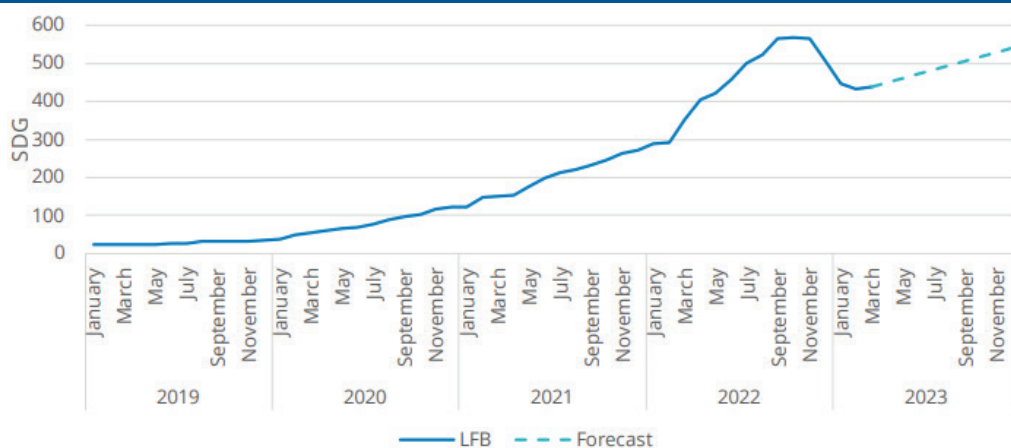
Despite an above-average national production of sorghum and millet, the main staple cereals, harvested

at the end of 2022, the conflict had a severe impact on food availability. Households forced to flee the combat zones had to abandon their food stocks, pillages were reported in several areas, especially in Khartoum and in Greater Darfur Region, and stocks of relief food were not spared, with nearly 17 000 out of the 80 000 tonnes of food ready to be distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) looted. In addition, several markets have been damaged or destroyed, but also in many functioning markets, shortages are reported as the conflict disrupted trade routes, impairing resupplying. The conflict is also likely to have a dramatic impact on the 2023 cropping season. Planting operations of sorghum and millet have just started and will continue until July, and the soaring prices and shortages of key inputs, including fuel, seeds, agrochemicals and migrating labour due to the conflict, are expected to significantly constrain planted area and hence cereal production, and inflate the already high production costs, resulting in further food price spikes.

Food access

Constraints to food access were the main driver of food insecurity already before the conflict and are being dramatically exacerbated as fighting is affecting both market functioning and household purchasing power. In addition, household ability to pay for food and other basic items is increasingly undermined by the difficulty to access bank and mobile money accounts. Prices of food, fuel and other basic goods are skyrocketing, on top of the already high prices, making critical goods unaffordable for an increasing number of households. According to the

Figure 1: The Sudan – Cost of local food basket and projection, March–December 2023



Source: WFP. 2023. Conflict in Sudan – Food Security Analysis and Forecast. World Food Programme (WFP), Research Assessment and Monitoring (RAM). Rome. 5 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/conflict-sudan-food-security-analysis-and-forecast-may-2023>.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF),^{iv} in the conflict-affected areas, prices of basic commodities, including bottled water, food staples and fuel, have increased by 40 to 60 percent since mid-April 2023. There are also reports of rapidly rising transport costs, making it increasingly difficult for people to leave the conflict-affected areas. According to WFP,^v the price of a local food basket, already 28 percent higher on a yearly basis in March 2023, is expected to increase by a further 25 percent in the next three to six months, if the conflict continues (Figure 1).

WFP has projected that this increase in food prices, if it materializes, will prevent 18 million people to meet their basic food needs.

Macroeconomic situation and outlook

The country has been facing a deepening political and economic crisis over the last decade. Following the secession of South Sudan in 2011, which took three-quarters of the oil output, leaving the country with half of fiscal revenues and one-third of export earnings, macroeconomic conditions significantly deteriorated. Since then, increasing trade and current account deficits, shortages of foreign exchange reserves, rampant inflation, depreciation of the national currency and unsustainable debt levels, have resulted in severe fiscal challenges. The scarcity of resources undermined public service delivery, resulting in widespread socioeconomic vulnerability. The ongoing conflict has resulted in a major blow to the country's already stagnating economy, with the heavy fighting in the capital, Khartoum, the main business hub, where banking and customs procedures are centralized, having severely hampered external and internal trade flows. Exports of livestock and imports of wheat and fertilizers are reported to

have significantly slowed down. While Port Sudan, the country's main port on the Red Sea is still operating, the lack of trucks and drivers is disrupting and delaying loading and offloading of ships. In addition, a major shipping company has interrupted shipments to and from the Sudan until further notice. The conflict will likely dissuade both bilateral and multilateral donors from disbursing funds. Without any external support, the government will be forced to monetize the deficit, with the increase in money supply expected to result in an increase of the already high inflation rates. Estimates indicated a decline of 2.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) already before the eruption of the conflict. If hostilities continue, the economic crisis affecting the country will deepen further.

Current food security situation and likely evolution

The conflict, causing large-scale displacements and livelihood losses, has severely constrained food availability and access and resulted, after less than one month, in the deterioration of an already difficult food security situation. According to the recently released 2023 Revised Humanitarian Response Plan,^{vi} 19.9 million people are expected to require emergency food and livelihood assistance in the June-September lean season, if the conflict continues. This figure is 70 percent higher than the pre-conflict estimate of 11.7 million people as reported in the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan that was released at the end of 2022.^{vii} The highest prevalence of food insecurity is expected in West Darfur, West Kordofan, Blue Nile, Red Sea and North Darfur States. Unimpeded humanitarian access is urgently needed to support vulnerable households in conflict affected areas and IDPs to avert catastrophic consequences.

Notes

- i. **OCHA**. 2023. *Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan 2023. Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2023*. Khartoum. Reliefweb. 17 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-revised-humanitarian-response-plan-2023-revision-issued-17-may-2023>.
- ii. **IOM**. 2023. *DTM Sudan - Situation Report 3*. International Organization for Migration (IOM). Sudan. 7 May 2023. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-3>.
- iii. **NRC**. 2023. *Conflict Displacement: Madani, Al Jazira - Rapid Needs Assessment – 25 April 2023*. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Norway. Cited 5 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/conflict-displacement-madani-al-jazira-rapid-needs-assessment-25-april-2023>.
- iv. **UNICEF**. 2023. *Sudan: Clashes between Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces, Humanitarian External Situation Report No. 1 – 25 April 2023*. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. United States of America. Cited 28 April 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/unicef-sudan-humanitarian-situation-report-no1-saf-rsf-clashes-25-april-2023>.
- v. **WFP**. 2023. *Conflict in Sudan – Food Security Analysis and Forecast*. World Food Programme (WFP), Research Assessment and Monitoring (RAM). Rome. 5 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/conflict-sudan-food-security-analysis-and-forecast-may-2023>.
- vi. **OCHA**. 2023. *Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan 2023. Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2023*. Khartoum. Reliefweb. 17 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-revised-humanitarian-response-plan-2023-revision-issued-17-may-2023>.
- vii. **OCHA**. 2022. *2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (December 2022). Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2023*. Khartoum. Reliefweb. 14 December 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-2023-humanitarian-response-plan-december-2023-enar>.

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