



# SUDAN

## COUNTRY PROFILE

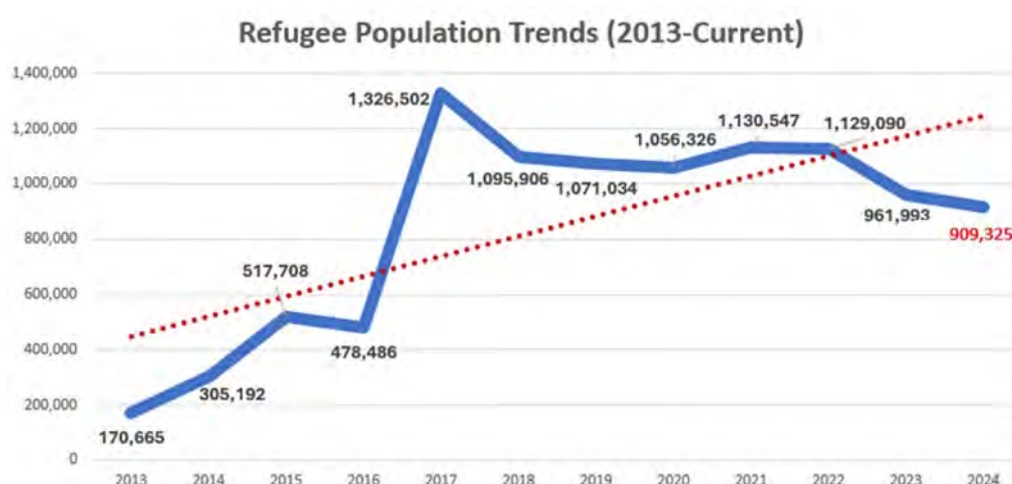
Development Partners Meeting on the Sudan  
Regional Refugee Crisis

September 17, 2024

## Country Context

The Sudan conflict is the world's fastest growing displacement crisis. It is also one of the largest protection crises facing the world today. An estimated 10.4 million people have been forcibly displaced since April 2023, including close to 8 million displaced internally and over 2.2 million refugees, asylum seekers and returnees who have crossed Sudan's borders into neighboring countries.<sup>1</sup> Sudan now has the largest number of internally displaced people globally – nearly 11 million including those who were displaced before the current conflict.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, Sudan's long history of generously hosting refugees continues in spite of the ongoing conflict. The country continues to have a sizeable refugee population, with 909,325 refugees and asylum seekers, making it the second largest refugee hosting country on the African continent.<sup>3</sup> The refugees hosted in Sudan mainly come from South Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, and Ethiopia, as well as the Central African Republic, Chad and Yemen. Sudan has kept its border open to new refugees arriving from Ethiopia and Eritrea (an estimated 13,667 have sought asylum in the country since the start of the conflict in April 2023). The majority are located in White Nile, Kassala and Gedaref states, where they have been adversely impacted both by the conflict and by extreme weather events linked to climate change, including floods and drought which destroy crops and livestock, and are likely to increase in frequency and severity. Even as the conflict rages on, the refugee population numbers remain stable.



In fact, the number of refugees dependent on assistance has grown as refugees who were previously self-reliant in urban areas affected by the conflict have sought safety and assistance in the existing camps. An estimated 257,097 refugees have been forced to self-relocate to relatively safer states internally, putting strain on already limited resources, infrastructure and social services. This comes on top of myriad ongoing challenges, including limited access to healthcare, employment opportunities, as well as multiple protection issues, including sexual violence and family separation. The dire circumstances in which they find themselves often exacerbate their vulnerability, leaving them susceptible to exploitation, violence and human rights abuses. Refugee children are often deprived of their rights, such as the right to access essential services, live in a protective family environment, birth registration and healthcare.

The ongoing conflict has posed numerous and significant challenges for both, refugees and their host communities in Sudan. As a result, there is a high dependency on assistance and aid from humanitarian actors. The competition for resources and assistance is high between the communities, and without

<sup>1</sup> [Situation Sudan situation \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/sudan-situation). 104 M includes self-relocated refugees

<sup>2</sup> [IOM | Sudan Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\) | Sudan Mobility Update \(4\) Publication Date: 23 July 2024 - Sudan | ReliefWeb](#)

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, Refugee population as of 30 June 2024.

support to build community relations and social cohesion, the risks and likelihood of tensions arising are significant, adding to the already complicated conflict profile of the country. Without a resolution to the crisis, many hundreds of thousands more people will be forced to flee, in search of safety and basic assistance. UNHCR and its partners estimate that the number of refugees, returnees, third country nationals and host community affected could reach 3.3 million throughout the region by the end of 2024.<sup>4</sup> If the crisis continues, peace and stability across the region will be at stake.

Even before the current conflict, displaced persons in Sudan faced multidimensional poverty rates significantly higher than national averages. Among IDPs, 4 in 5 displaced from earlier fighting in Darfur lived below the national poverty line, compared to 3 in 5 residents of surrounding areas ([World Bank, 2018](#)). The Sudan Rural Household Survey 2023 shows significant impacts of the conflict on livelihoods and rapidly increasing food insecurity, including among IDP households ([UNDP, 2024](#)), while the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in Sudan foresees further rapid deterioration of food security into 2025, leaving an estimated 25.6M people in high levels of acute food insecurity and 14 areas at risk of famine ([IPC, 2024](#)). Efforts are underway to include refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs into the World Bank's forthcoming High Frequency Phone Survey in Sudan, which builds on the earlier pandemic phone surveys assessing the impacts of the crisis on socioeconomic conditions, income and employment ([World Bank, 2020-22](#)).

## Recommended Priority Investments

Despite the difficult operational environment, humanitarian actors are providing protection and assistance to people affected by the conflict through a three-pronged strategy:

1. Maintaining critical and lifesaving services in conflict-affected, hotspot areas.
2. Providing urgent assistance to newly displaced and host communities, including secondarily displaced refugee populations in the country.
3. Ensuring basic service delivery continues throughout the country, building on system strengthening in safer states.

While UN agencies and NGO partners are using humanitarian funding in the hotspot states, as well for the humanitarian response to displaced populations, development funding for basic social and economic services needs to continue in the safer states. The development approach is critical to ensure longer-term sustainable solutions to the displacement crisis.

The following priority interventions are recommended to development partners engaging in Sudan:

1. **Mainstreaming refugees in development programmes:** The refugee population should be fully integrated in development programs, especially as most of the current interventions seek to build community resilience, enhance access to basic services, and build social cohesion. Refugee populations should not be left behind from these area-based interventions by development actors. All stabilization and early recovery programming should consider all forcibly displaced populations – internally displaced populations, refugees, asylum seekers.
2. **Inclusive education system:** As of July 2024, 19 million children were estimated to be out of school, including nearly 400,000 refugees. Approximately 6.5 million children lost access to education due to increased violence and insecurity in their regions, with many schools closed in conflict-affected areas. The inclusion of refugees in ongoing national and state-level efforts in

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<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, [Sudan Emergency, Regional Refugee Response Plan January – December 2024, Mid-Term Update, June 2024](#).

Sudan to resume education services and rebuild a stronger, more effective, and resilient education system is commendable. The international community should support the Government of Sudan to put in place conflict-sensitive approaches to enrolment and transition, teacher support and curriculum delivery as essential for all children, including refugees, to re-enroll, and remain, in school. Refugee communities face unique issues such as access to documentation, recognition of prior learning, and constraints imposed by their encampment and limited work opportunities. Investments in education system capacity must also be responsive to these needs, facilitating long-term and sustainable refugee enrolment and transition in the national education system.

3. **Inclusive health system:** There is an urgent need to invest in the health system and infrastructure, including primary health care facilities and referral hospitals providing secondary health care at a referral capacity. Investments must support the Ministry of Health and health sector partners to increase supplies of medical commodities and laboratory capacity (medicines for chronic diseases, renal dialysis, testing capacity & rapid diagnostic tests and laboratory supplies for healthcare facilities, supplies for maternal care, and neonatal care commodities). Support is also critical for the Famine Prevention Plan and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) stabilization centres for children with SAM with clinical complications.
4. **Inclusive Social Protection Systems:** With government-led social protection under severe strain, UN agencies and partners are currently providing cash transfers and other forms of social assistance – a critical lifeline for host and displaced communities. While doing so, it is important to assess lessons learned jointly with development partners and how these can inform and “build back better” a future state-led social protection system. The international community should support the Government of Sudan to establish a social protection system that introduces conflict-sensitive approaches and includes forcibly displaced people, allowing them to enroll and benefit from social protection programmes.
5. **Economic inclusion and private sector support:** Refugees and refugee hosting areas should be included in development assistance programs seeking to support the private sector and create economic opportunities for people and communities. Targeted sectors may include agriculture and small and medium enterprises, which require clarification of land use titles, inputs and distribution networks, as well credit and capacity building opportunities to enable refugees and host community to increase and stabilize their incomes.
6. **Urban displacement solutions:** As urbanization continues and many IDPs and refugees seek opportunities in cities, it is important to develop comprehensive urban strategies that address the needs of host, refugee and IDP populations. These strategies should include upgrading informal settlements and improving urban infrastructure to accommodate increased populations, developing social housing programs that benefit refugee, IDP and low-income host community members, and creating urban livelihood programs that tap into the skills of urban refugees.
7. **Inclusion in peace efforts:** Forcibly displaced people are disproportionately affected by the impacts of armed conflict. As more than one fifth of Sudan’s population has been forcibly displaced, the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in peacemaking and peacebuilding will be vital to the country’s long-term recovery and reconstruction. In particular, youth serve as crucial leaders and enablers of both humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives in Sudan, even while living in displacement. Young women and men should thus be mobilized as key agents of change who can contribute to more peaceful and resilient societies. To achieve this, it is essential to explore ways to strengthen the quality of conflict analysis, particularly the specificity of analysis at the local level, the efficiency of information-gathering processes, and mechanisms to share and reflect on findings. By refining these processes, we can better support the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in peace efforts, ensuring their voices are heard and their leadership is recognized.



8. **Post-conflict recovery:** Looking ahead at a scenario when peace returns to Sudan, development partners should support return areas and ensure planning and programming that are inclusive of all communities, build on community planning and prioritization, and identify opportunities to include returnees and high return areas in broader development programs. Key areas for consideration include strengthening the capacity of government institutions (such as civil registries, ministries of education, health, and social protection etc.), providing financial resources to humanitarian agencies for improved coordination, expanding cash-based interventions, addressing housing, land, and property (HLP) issues, enhancing protection mainstreaming, and fostering economic empowerment through job creation initiatives.

## Demographic Profile of Refugees in Sudan

