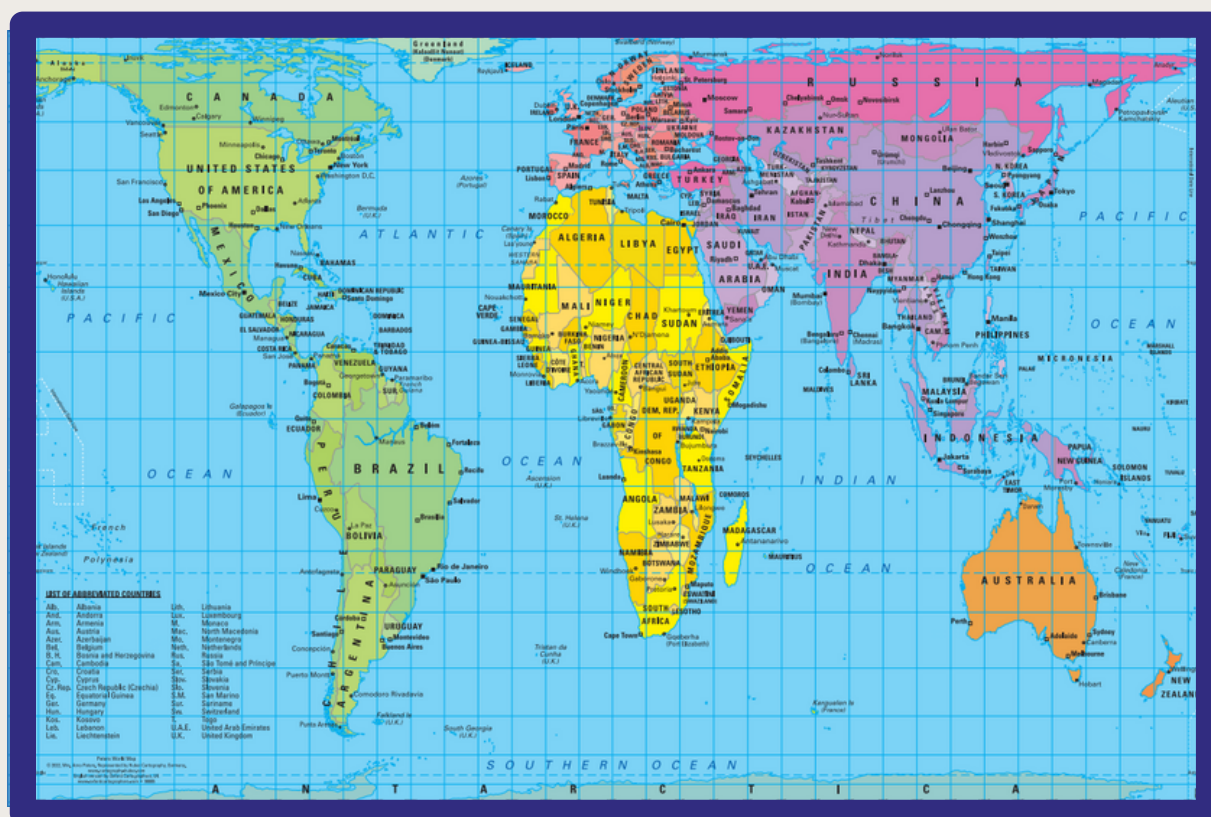


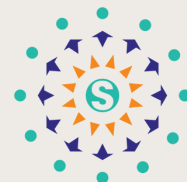
31 July 2023

Localised solutions to humanitarian crises in Sudan

Sudan Crisis Coordination Unit
(SCCU)
BRIEF #2



The Peters Projection Map



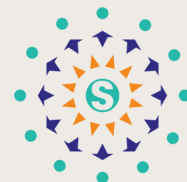
About the SCCU

The Sudan Crisis Coordination Unit (SCCU) aims to facilitate the coordination of resources and efforts among various groups and networks, including diaspora organisations, humanitarian aid agencies, local civil society organisations, and government agencies.

By enhancing communication and coordination among these entities, we aim to ensure a more effective and efficient response to the crisis, maximising the impact of available resources



For further information: sudan@shabaka.org



Summary

This brief highlights the challenges hindering scaled, impactful, and localised responses during the current conflict in Sudan and emphasises the importance of overcoming such in order to enhance the quality, accountability, and ownership of humanitarian efforts. These challenges include:

- Lack of safe corridors;
- Disruptions to cash flows and the collapse of banking systems;
- Language and terminology barriers;
- Issues with the architecture of humanitarian aid; and
- Neighbouring countries' regulations.

To address these challenges, we propose the following:

- Secure stronger commitments from regional and international organisations to collaborate with local actors, including those unregistered.
- Channel funding and support to national and local responders, whether registered or not, using the framework developed by the NEAR Network.
- Foster deeper dialogue among international, regional, and local actors.
- Establish more flexible and predictable funding mechanisms for local organisations.
- Harmonise and simplify procedures for the registration and operation of local organisations.
- Protect and support local staff and partners. Develop more tailored and flexible approaches to aid delivery based on the specific location within Sudan and abroad, considering the unique needs and circumstances of each affected region.

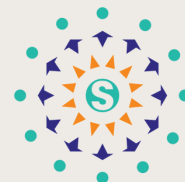
Addressing these challenges and implementing the proposed solutions will lead to a more effective and sustainable humanitarian response in Sudan.



Overview

Sudan faces intersectional humanitarian crises, including political instability, economic collapse, armed conflict, displacement, food insecurity, a weakened healthcare system, and environmental degradation ([CDP](#)). Since the outbreak of war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April 2023, the number of those in need of humanitarian aid and protection has risen sharply to approximately 24.7 million, nearly half of Sudan's population ([UN](#)). More than 3.5 million people have been displaced both internally and to neighbouring countries since the onset of war ([OCHA](#)). Furthermore, the [WFP](#) projects that over 19 million people will face food insecurity, as over one-third of the population had already been grappling with a hunger crisis prior to the conflict. It is worth noting that the war in Ukraine has played a significant role in the above, as 80% of Sudan's wheat imports had been sourced from Ukraine and Russia ([ReliefWeb](#), [OCHA](#)).

Conflict-related challenges have led to power outages, restricted internet access, and fuel shortages, all of which further hinder already fragile healthcare services in affected areas ([WHO](#)). Over 80% of hospitals and healthcare facilities are either non-operational or operating at significantly reduced capacity ([ReliefWeb](#)).



Practical Steps To Scale and Sustain

PRACTICAL STEPS TO SCALE AND SUSTAIN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN SUDAN (July 2023)

Sudan faces a complex humanitarian crisis with multiple drivers of conflict, displacement, food insecurity, and health emergencies.

The humanitarian response in Sudan requires urgent scaling up and sustaining, as well as a shift from short-term relief to long-term recovery and resilience.

In this brief, we outline some practical steps humanitarian actors can take to achieve these goals based on working closely with local and diaspora humanitarian responders.

KEY MESSAGES

- LOCALISING THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN SUDAN IS A MUST
- BE INNOVATIVE AND AGILE
- WORK TOGETHER, NOT IN SILOS



PARALLEL COORDINATION NOT IN SILOS

Instead of imposing a top-down coordination system potentially unsuitable to the local context and capacities, humanitarian actors should seek to collaborate with existing coordination mechanisms among local groups and the Sudanese diaspora.

Such mechanisms can provide valuable information, access, and resources that complement and enhance the cluster system. The SCCU can act as a bridge between the different actors, ensuring that information and resources are shared and aligned.

COMMUNICATION WITH AFFECTED PEOPLE

Humanitarian actors should not assume they know what affected populations need and want and, therefore, must engage in meaningful dialogue that respects such populations agency and diversity. To do this, humanitarian actors **MUST collaborate with local partners with expertise in and experience of communicating with target groups** using appropriate languages, formats, & channels.

FIND WAYS TO TRANSFER CASH

Cash-based interventions are an effective and dignified way to support those affected, but they depend on the availability and functionality of electronic transfer systems.

Due to infrastructure, security, or regulatory issues, however, these systems may not work well in some areas.

One possible solution is to leverage the networks and trust of local actors such as local organisations, community leaders, or diaspora groups who can facilitate the electronic transfer process through their own means and methods. These groups and key individuals can also ensure transparency and accountability by verifying the identity and eligibility of recipients and reporting on outcomes.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THOSE DISPLACED

Many people have fled Sudan due to the conflict and violence, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries or beyond. However, such people face many protection risks and challenges in host countries, including discrimination, exploitation, violence, & lack of legal status.

ADDRESSING AID OBSTRUCTION

Humanitarian actors face many obstacles and risks in delivering aid to those in need, such as bureaucratic hurdles, security threats, access restrictions, and interference from armed groups or authorities. To address these challenges, humanitarian actors must use data-driven advocacy to communicate more effectively and persuasively with decision-makers and stakeholders, influencing them to help facilitate and protect aid delivery.

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is a complex and urgent challenge requiring innovative and flexible solutions. Many actors are trying to respond to the needs of affected populations but face multiple barriers and constraints.

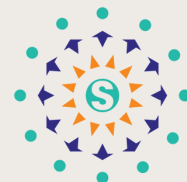
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Since April 2023, renewed conflict has added new urgency to turning talk on localisation—the process of adapting humanitarian interventions to local contexts and capacities—into action. As access and security needs increase, localisation becomes even more critical to effective and sustainable aid delivery, especially in complex and protracted crises like Sudan. Local groups, notably Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), operate in the different regions affected by the conflict. The ERRs are amongst many youth-led and community-organised initiatives that have sprung up or been activated in various locales in response to the conflict.



Emergency Response Rooms

These ‘rooms’ are grassroots, volunteer-based, mutual aid hubs during these times of deep crisis.

In some areas, the ERRs are driven by long-standing neighbourhood committees who have worked since before the 2019 popular revolution to respond to various crises affecting Sudan ([Shabaka](#)). As such, these ERRs build on learning processes from a decade of previous crises—including flooding disasters, outbreaks of cholera, and the Covid-19 pandemic—and strive to address the community’s humanitarian needs: from evacuation to health care to securing food through shared kitchens and other interventions ([CSIS](#)).

In parts of the country such as Khartoum, some local, volunteer-driven initiatives, despite being under-resourced and operating in difficult conditions, collaborate with INGOs in the response. Indeed, some INGOs—such as MSF and the Norwegian Refugee Council—are also active in the country, but they must work with and through ERRs to achieve local impact. Bilateral donors such as USAID and FCDO are also exploring ways to support ERRs ([NRC 2023](#); [MSF 2023](#); [USAID 2023b](#)).



Challenges and solutions

Identifying alternative routes for humanitarian assistance

The current war in Khartoum and the deepening conflict in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile has severely restricted the movement of humanitarian actors, exposing them to attack and looting ([ReliefWeb](#); [ACAPS](#)). Local volunteers continue to support the fragile health sector in the face of security threats such as detention, persecution, and restriction of movement and access, limiting their ability to operate safely and effectively ([The New Humanitarian](#)).

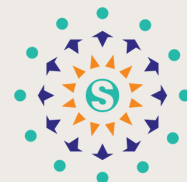
Key instances of targeting humanitarian workers

Three UN aid workers were killed in the first week of the conflict ([UN](#)), with at least 18 aid workers killed so far ([OCHA](#)).

Statement from UN Humanitarian chief in Sudan from 5 days ago: "Sadly, at least 18 aid workers have been killed and many more injured since the start of the conflict in Sudan. More than two dozen have been detained while some remain unaccounted for. Humanitarian facilities have also been attacked, with at least 50 humanitarian warehouses having been looted, 82 offices ransacked, and more than 200 vehicles stolen. The looting of one warehouse in Al Obeid alone in early June left us without food that could have fed 4.4 million people." ([OCHA](#)).

WHO has verified at least 51 attacks against health facilities since the fighting erupted, especially in conflict-affected areas ([UN](#)).

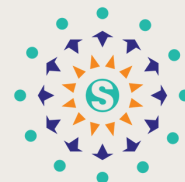
Many national NGOs have had to suspend or reduce operations, relocate staff or assets, or lost funding or access to resources and areas of operation. Some national NGOs have also faced harassment or intimidation from security forces or armed groups.



Despite this, experienced independent NGOs, which have had a historically difficult time operating in Sudan under the security and logistical constraints of the past three decades, have adapted and regrouped, carrying out rapid assessments, coordinating amongst each other, opening field offices in new areas, and partnering with local civil society in regions where the lack of safety limits their physical presence. However, national and local civil society's resourcefulness and creativity in responding to the conflict remains largely unnoticed and unsupported by the international community (NIDAA).

Solutions

- Ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid in challenging contexts. As such, humanitarian actors must collaborate with national and local organisations with a better understanding of the different entry points and pathways, as well as adapt to the specific geographical features of each location.
- Scale up partnerships with national and local organisations carefully and thoughtfully, putting in place clear measures that mitigate the risk to these entities and their workers. Community leaders must be involved in identifying the most feasible and effective routes for aid delivery, taking the security situation, terrain, weather, and needs of the affected population into account. Cluster meetings are not the fora for this process. There must be closer engagement and investment in developing consultation mechanisms based on partnership not data extraction, and cognizant of the fact that, for many diasporas and migrants, humanitarian engagement is a task in addition to their day-to-day work.
- Recognise that diaspora groups and organisations are an important conduit for understanding the crisis and potential responses. The UN and international organisations should have staff dedicated to engaging the diaspora in key capitals. There is also a strong need to develop diaspora engagement policies and strategies, for both long-term development and engagement during crises, which facilitate digital and distant connectivity, easing communication.



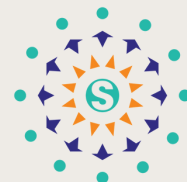
Addressing cash flow disruptions and the collapse of the banking sector

Sudan's already struggling economy faces several structural issues that have resulted in hyperinflation, currency devaluation, cash shortages, banking restrictions, and, in turn, the obstruction of cash-based assistance to affected populations.

Prices of essential goods and food staples have skyrocketed ([ReliefWeb](#)). Amid the soaring demand for local currency, the value of dollars is now subject to the goodwill of whomever agrees to exchange it. Fluctuations in the exchange rate will likely continue as the demand for foreign and local currency continues.

Although the majority of humanitarian assistance is provided, worldwide, as in-kind aid, cash is an important modality for humanitarian aid, as it provides flexibility, dignity, and choice for beneficiaries while also supporting local markets and livelihoods ([World Bank](#); [OECD](#)). Prior to the war, several INGOs provided cash or voucher assistance to IDPs in areas such as Darfur. However, there are currently no safe routes to transfer such assistance, as delivery of vouchers and cash could put staff or receivers at risk. Even in areas where there is no active fighting, financial services are unavailable as a result of servers and operations being centralised in Khartoum ([CGAP](#)). According to [Central Banking](#), for example, the SAF reportedly destroyed a money printing press to stop the RSF from using it to finance their operations. As a result, the country has a cash shortage, creating opportunities for informal cash agents and foreign-based financial institutions to exploit the situation ([The New Arab](#)).

Since the fighting erupted, some major banks have closed and been looted or bombed, alongside shops. Interbank transfers are impossible, and with intermittent to no internet in some areas, banking apps such as Bankakl and Fawri² are inconsistent and not reliably accessible. The Bank of Khartoum relies on Bankak for customer account access and mobile payments. However, the app's functionality has been compromised by the telecommunication breakdown, and the Bank of Khartoum is the only bank with an independent switch to enable account-to-account transfer.



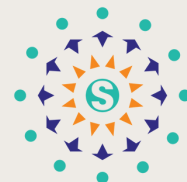
The state-owned Electronic Banking Services (EBS), the only service authorised to issue e-money, lost power early in the conflict, alongside many of the other existing mobile money options. In addition, some telecom providers had launched mobile money prior to the war, but these products are still new and difficult to find from mobile money agents ([CGAP](#)).

Other banks in Sudan were reliant on the Central Bank switch system, and branches outside the central conflict zone of Khartoum cannot access the servers remotely. Thus, liquidity previously arriving from abroad through trade and the diaspora has been largely halted ([Reuters](#)).

Central Bank of Sudan

After an over three-month pause due to the war, the Central Bank of Sudan announced on 16th June that their operations had resumed. Since then, the Central Bank has successfully connected 22 banks to the network, retrieved the banking system data, and launched applications in all bank branches across the country. The Central Bank is also working to implement the Swift system, ensure the gold purchase committees continue to do their work, and pass measures related to imports and transfers through banking applications in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Ministry of Commerce, and the General Authority of Customs.

The Central Bank is focused on tightening policies to meet the needs of various economic sectors and achieving monetary policy objectives, including reducing inflation and stabilising the exchange rate to boost the national economy. The Central Bank mentioned certain banks' readiness to operate electronic applications and are closely monitoring to restore such applications. Bank branches in states unaffected by the conflict have increased in number and are gradually returning to work, with ongoing efforts by the Crisis Management Committee and emergency committees to ensure the full operation of all branches. Furthermore, the Central Bank plans to resume communication with international organisations, such as the Financial Inclusion Alliance and Al-Afraka, to follow up on their progress ([Medameek](#), [Dabanga](#)).



Solutions

- Implement digital, internet-dependent payment systems, aside from apps, that can reduce dependence on physical cash and increase financial inclusion. INGOs have, in the past, leveraged cash-based programming to support humanitarian assistance.
- Identify local trading partners who still have cash liquidity in the country. INGOs and diaspora actors can then make an agreement with these partners to deliver cash to safe zones where it is most needed (for transport, medicine, emergency food kits) and funds can be transferred from abroad (from the Middle East or West) to Bank of Khartoum accounts through Bankak.
- Support and endorse local mechanisms with minimal dependence on digital access, such as providing vouchers through programmes like the FAO's Cash and Voucher assistance and others successful in conflict zones in the past ([ReliefWeb](#); [World Bank](#)).



Direct funding for local organisations and groups

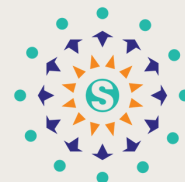
The response by donors to the crisis in Sudan has been very weak thus far. More than 100 days into the conflict, only 23.6% of the UN's total requirements of 2.57 billion USD has been met. But another aspect of funding that garners less attention is the importance of involving local actors, who are at the heart of the response (FTS – OCHA).

The ongoing crisis in Sudan has posed significant challenges to civil society actors, many of whom have lost staff, resources, their operational bases, and have had to relocate either within or outside the country. To continue their work, they must adopt different outreach and engagement strategies, and could benefit from diaspora support.

To support local organisations and groups, international actors must remove the structural barriers hindering access to direct funding. Some in Sudan perceive such barriers as deliberate attempts to exclude local actors from funding opportunities. These barriers include bureaucratic requirements, complex internal procedures, and insufficient staff to manage grants. Moreover, most calls for proposals are published online and in the donor country's language, creating difficulties for local and national actors in Sudan who have limited internet access or mainly use Arabic and other local languages.

Solutions

- Arabic should be the lingua franca for all meetings and events related to Sudan, as well as local languages and dialects for specific regions.
- Hire Sudanese staff, in Sudan and neighbouring countries, for the response.
- Support the registration or re-registration process for Sudanese groups and organisations, whether in Sudan or neighbouring countries.
- Make available funding transparent and widely publicised, as well as support Sudanese civil society to apply.

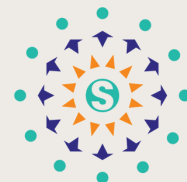


Durable solutions in neighbouring countries

Humanitarian crises—such as conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics—often result in large-scale displacement and suffering. Providing immediate relief and protection is essential, but more is needed to address the needs and rights of affected populations. Durable solutions are interventions that deliver long-term, sustainable benefits for communities, rather than a short-term, emergency response. Durable solutions aim to end displacement and restore normalcy, are also crucial for the long-term well-being and dignity of displaced persons and host communities ([ReliefWeb](#)). However, such solutions are often neglected or postponed until the crisis is over, which can take years or even decades. This is a missed opportunity: durable solutions can and should be pursued from the outset of a crisis, in parallel with humanitarian assistance, as pursuing such early on can help prevent protracted displacement, foster social cohesion, enhance resilience, and contribute to peace and stability.

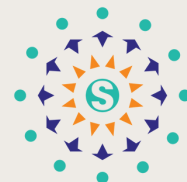
While the social backgrounds of those who have fled to either neighbouring countries or further afield vary, they share common challenges at the borders and in the host countries: uncertainty about their legal status, access to basic services, education, healthcare, work, and assistance. Local actors, not the international community, have been the main providers of support to affected populations.

Sudanese displaced in neighbouring countries face a major challenge in receiving humanitarian aid: the regulations of those neighbouring countries. For instance, some countries do not allow doctors licensed elsewhere to work in their territory or at their border, even in times of crisis. This can limit access to health care for vulnerable, displaced populations, and create ethical dilemmas for medical professionals.



Solutions

- To address the Sudan crisis effectively, a regional approach that takes the needs of both the displaced and host communities into account is necessary. Humanitarian actors must engage with the authorities of neighbouring countries and coordinate with international and regional organisations such as UNHCR, ICRC, or the AU, who may have more leverage or influence over host countries.
- Humanitarian actors should also advocate for regulatory changes in neighbouring countries and at borders to facilitate a more effective response involving skilled local and diaspora professionals and humanitarian actors.
- Invest in local businesses and social enterprises that address humanitarian needs and create livelihood opportunities.
- Introduce employability projects, create more jobs for IDPs and refugees, and provide more access to educational opportunities in neighbouring countries.



Decentralised response

In terms of accessing different parts of the country, such as El Genaina, intense violence has made it difficult for international, national, or local organisations to respond. While some UN agencies, such as WFP, and several international NGOs are currently present in the country, their reach is limited. Most international agencies are restricted to Port Sudan, which is nearly 1,000 km from Khartoum and nearly 1,500 km from Darfur over poor roads. A more agile approach is necessary in such a fast-changing situation; being located in one site compromises both the current and future humanitarian response, as there is no guarantee that Port Sudan will remain safe.

Solutions

- Engage the Sudanese diaspora, some of whom work at the headquarters of international organisations and UN agencies, to help facilitate better connections with local actors. There are various resources and frameworks to help facilitate this.
- Identify the needs and capacities of local actors in the context of humanitarian crisis, and strengthen the accountability and quality of local humanitarian action through training, learning, and feedback mechanisms.
- Provide flexible and predictable funding and technical support to local groups to help them deliver humanitarian assistance effectively and efficiently.
- Promote the participation and leadership of local groups in humanitarian decision-making and advocacy at all levels.



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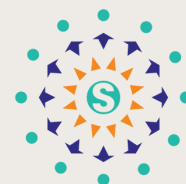
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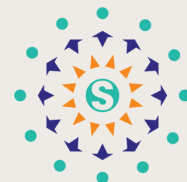
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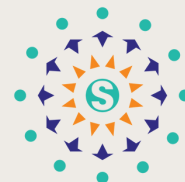
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