

The Sudan Crisis and Implications for Neighbouring Countries

On 12 September, 2023 Shabaka and NatCen International, the global arm of the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) held the first event in a three-part series on the current crisis in Sudan. The speakers for the event were Bashair Ahmed, CEO of Shabaka and Faith Kasina, regional spokesperson for UNHCR in the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region. The event was chaired by Sherine El Taraboulsi–McCarthy, Director of NatCen International.

The current crisis in Sudan has displaced 5 million people, with 4 million people being displaced in Sudan and 1 million people being displaced into neighbouring countries including Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Sudan was also a host country for third country nationals, including 100,000 Syrians and 1.5 million South Sudanese people who are now also experiencing displacement. Food insecurity levels in Sudan are currently classed at IPC 3 or 4, with IPC level 5 indicating famine. Over 24 million people now need humanitarian assistance due to the crisis.

The focus of this event was the impact and implications of the Sudan crisis for neighboring countries and the region at large. Key insights from the event include the following:

- [Sudan is now one of the worst in the world for humanitarian access.](#) There are several factors that continue to hinder relief efforts and those include the lack of humanitarian corridors, attacks on humanitarian convoys as well as the displacement of humanitarian workers. Additionally, the distance between Port Sudan and the most impacted areas of the country has added another barrier to humanitarian access - [The distance from Port Sudan to El Geneina – a conflict-affected town in Darfur – is around 1,700 kilometres which is similar to the distance from London to Warsaw.](#) The speakers called for urgent action to unblock those barriers and facilitate humanitarian access to the affected populations.
- Regional impacts of the crisis include displaced Sudanese people fleeing into neighboring countries and further displacement of refugees and third country nationals in Sudan, adding pressure on already struggling economies – Egypt for example is already facing a serious economic crisis. There are security concerns as well around the possibility of hostilities spilling over into neighboring countries and for the conflict to feed into already existing regional rivalries.
- Response from neighboring countries includes moving displaced Sudanese and other affected nationals at borders to various in-country locations, such as refugee camps, or to their countries of origin. This also includes some third country nationals returning to origin or other countries in the Horn of Africa. Neighbouring countries have also worked to provide access to necessities such as food and water to affected people at the borders or in refugee camps, but these efforts are hindered due to security issues, poor infrastructure, and climate events.

- A key challenge to the humanitarian response is protection for civilians, humanitarian workers and civil society organizations. There have been several incidents where they have been targeted by warring parties. Sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) is also increasing and is being used as a weapon of war.
- Lack of funding from donor countries is impacting relief efforts. Humanitarian needs are rising faster than funds are being sent, making it harder for humanitarian services to be provided. Reasons for low donor funding included several concurrent crises happening globally which are stretching donor funds, economic crises in donor countries, and cuts to aid budgets in donor countries. Research has also pointed out that foreign policy priorities impact humanitarian donorship and therefore, there is a need to continue advocacy efforts to support the Sudan response.
- The main source of humanitarian relief has come from local actors in the Sudanese civil society they not included in formal humanitarian infrastructure. An example of this is the [emergency response rooms \(ERRs\)](#) that provide shelter, food, and water to displaced people. ERRs are often managed by volunteers and rely on [financial support](#) through donations provided by local actors and the Sudanese diaspora. Diaspora support is also regional as many Sudanese diaspora are sending funds to displaced relatives in Egypt, Chad, and other neighboring countries
- It is important to see how organizations like the AU have responded to the Sudan crisis. The AU announced Roadmap for the Resolution of the Conflict in Sudan. The AU and IGAD need to be more visible to local organisations to help increase the level of trust between them and local actors. This can be done by providing local actors with clear pathways for advocacy with the AU, IGAD, and other regional bodies.
- To ensure full protection for civilians and humanitarian workers and to create humanitarian corridors, hostilities need to end. Regional bodies such as the AU and IGAD are working to bring the warring factions together so they can agree to end hostilities. Truces had been made previously but they were not kept.
- Speakers pointed out that humanitarian response should be conducted in a holistic way (rather than piecemeal) and there is a need to adopt cross-sectoral approaches linking humanitarian assistance to development to ensure that learning from other crises is drawn up in the Sudan response. It should also include a focus on livelihoods, protection, access to basic services, shelter, and education.

The full webinar is available to watch [online](#). Information on the remaining two events in this series will be made available shortly.