



CRS Sudan: Emergency Response Strategy

ADDRESSING AN UNFOLDING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS | JULY 2023 - JULY 2024





Cover: Daralsalam Yahya is a farmer and mother of seven children in West Darfur. She is part of a savings and internal lending communities group, and receives nutrition training as well as agriculture seeks, tools and training support in the RISING II project, supported by USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance. Photo by Carlos Barrio/CRS

24.7 million

SUDANESE ARE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. HALF OF THEM ARE CHILDREN.

4.7 million

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY THE RECENT CONFLICT

CONTEXT

On April 15, 2023, armed conflict erupted across Sudan, with fighting concentrated in the capital, Khartoum, and in cities across the Darfur and Kordofan states. An estimated 4.7 million people have been displaced within the country, or fled across the border to neighboring Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, and Libya (OHCA 2023, Figure 1).

According to the United Nation's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), roughly half the country's population—24.7 million people, more than half of whom are children—require humanitarian assistance.

The conflict has taken a heavy toll on infrastructure, which has suffered damage in the fighting, and further limited people's access to water, health care and other goods and services. As such, nearly 15 million people require assistance in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and 11 million have critical health needs.¹ (OCHA 2023)

Even before this escalation in conflict, communities across the country had faced heightened humanitarian needs due to inter-communal violence, typically among farming and livestock communities.

Given the context of both conflict and displacement, many farmers have had been unable to access to their land, seeds and materials for cultivation. Concerns are high that this season's harvests might fail, which would be devastating at the personal, household and market levels. With the potential for diminished food, nutrition and incomes, it is anticipated that 20 million people will need even more assistance (OCHA 2023).

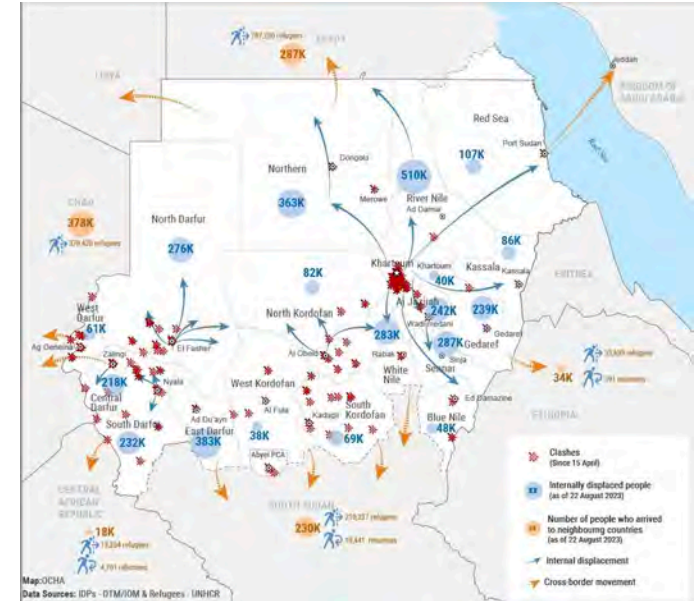


Figure 1. Map of displacement in Sudan as of 23 August 2023.

The current events have reignited inter-communal violence across Darfur, and led to 300,000 people fleeing West Darfur to Chad (IOM 2023).² Nearly 90% of the refugee population are women and children, and a quarter have specific vulnerabilities, such as a disability or being separated from family members (UNHCR 2023).³ Many describe their travel overland as dangerous, especially when traveling with children and pregnant women; half of those reported having been separated from a family member (REACH 2023).⁴ The risks are notably high for those who couldn't flee—the elderly, people with disabilities, and low-income households—and who remain in areas of intense conflict because travel was not a viable option.

1. [UNOCHA Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.](#)
2. [IOM DTM Sudan Situation Report 14](#)
3. [UNHCR Chad Influx of Refugees June 2023](#)
4. [IMPACT: Sudan Crisis Thread REACH](#)

CRS CAPACITY TO RESPOND

CRS has served communities in Sudan since 1978, with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable populations, conflict-affected communities, and internally displaced families in Khartoum. In 1982, CRS closed its Khartoum office and relocated its operations to what is now South Sudan. In 2004, CRS reopened the Sudan country program to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

CRS works with local and international partners to implement programming in some of Sudan's most hard-to-reach areas across the five Darfur States, with plans to expand to eastern Sudan. CRS has been active in responding to emergencies, supporting people's recovery after conflict and promoting long-term resilience.

Given people's holistic needs, CRS takes a comprehensive approach in providing assistance, including health and nutrition, water and sanitation, food security, livelihoods, natural resource management (NRM) and peacebuilding.

Working in Partnership

CRS has nearly 200 national staff, and works with seconded staff from the state ministries of health to implement emergency health and nutrition projects in West and Central Darfur. CRS is proud to maintain active partnerships with national NGOs, including: Peace Light for Rural Development Organization, Attamass Development Organization, West Darfur Youth Organization for Development, Global Aid Hand, and Trust, Rehabilitation and Development Organization.

CRS has a long history as an implementing partner of USAID, including its Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA); Democracy and Governance; and Farmer to Farmer initiative. CRS' partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) spans two decades. Each year, WFP-funded projects in West and Central Darfur provide life-saving interventions to nearly 1 million people (Figure 2). These programs utilize both in-kind and cash transfer modalities, as well as provide emergency food distributions and nutritional support to people affected by conflict and displacement. Other key donors include UNICEF, Sudan Humanitarian Fund and the European Union.

In June 2023, CRS relocated its operational hub from Khartoum to Port Sudan. In addition to the new country office in Port Sudan, CRS has 10 field offices across Gedaref and East, West and Central Darfur, as well as 14 warehouses in Central and West Darfur. The accessibility of offices and warehouses has been fluid. Given the severe disruption to markets, as well as looting across West Darfur, CRS is collaborating with its offices in Chad and relevant UN agencies to explore cross-border options for bringing humanitarian supplies from Chad into West Darfur.

The crisis in Sudan requires a well-coordinated, rapid and robust humanitarian response to save lives, reduce suffering, build resilience, and support social cohesion and peacebuilding. CRS and our local partners address both urgent and longer-term needs.

Key Takeaways

- **Long-term commitment:** CRS has 20 years of experience providing humanitarian assistance in Sudan.
- **Locally-led:** CRS works with local partners, including national NGOs, line ministries, and community-based structures.
- **Operational presence:** CRS' operational presence is focused in Darfur, with plans to expand to eastern Sudan.



Figure 2. Distribution of commodities from WFP in West Darfur, December 2022. Photo by Mohammed Elnour/CRS.

CRS RESPONSE

CRS has developed a response framework that contributes to an overall goal that all people in Sudan should have the opportunity to survive and thrive in the face of disaster. The framework comprises three strategic objectives that span humanitarian emergency response and the nexus with development and peacebuilding. Within this framework, CRS hopes to leverage its strengths and experience across program areas and technical sectors to meet the critical needs of people devastated by the ongoing and escalating crisis. CRS will use adaptive management to respond to the evolving context and changing needs of participants, layering early recovery, resilience and peacebuilding programs into the early stage of emergency response programming. Foundational to this work are cross-cutting considerations to ensure program quality. The following table outlines the results framework for CRS Sudan's Emergency Strategy, including three Strategic Objectives (SOs), and their corresponding Intermediate Results (IRs) under each sector.

All people in Sudan survive and thrive in the face of disasters and conflict			
	Humanitarian Response Strategy		Nexus with Development and Peacebuilding
Sectors	SO1: Crisis-affected households have met their immediate needs in safety and with dignity	SO2: Households in protracted crises have the foundations of a healthy, safe and dignified life	SO3: Households affected by shocks and protracted crises have improved social cohesion and resilience
Food Security and Livelihoods	IR 1.1: Crisis-affected households access life-saving food assistance.	IR 2.1: Vulnerable households have improved access to food during protracted crises. IR 2.2: Vulnerable households resume livelihoods activities.	IR3.1 Vulnerable households practice sustainable, inclusive livelihoods.
Basic needs in WASH, NFI, Shelter	IR 1.2: Crisis-affected households have safe and dignified temporary shelter and household items. IR 1.3: Crisis-affected households have information and resources for safe water, sanitation, and hygiene.	IR 2.3: Vulnerable households live in dignified, stable housing. IR 2.4: Vulnerable households adopt improved WASH practices	IR 3.2 Vulnerable households have sustainable and dignified living conditions
Health and Nutrition	IR 1.4: Crisis-affected households access essential health services IR 1.5: Children under five and pregnant and lactating women access nutrition services.	IR 2.5: Vulnerable households have improved access to comprehensive health services. IR 2.6: Vulnerable households adopt improved nutrition practices.	IR3.3: Vulnerable households have sustained access to comprehensive health services. IR 3.4: Vulnerable households integrate good nutrition practices into their daily life
Social Cohesion & Psychosocial Support	IR 1.5: Crisis-affected households are linked to psychosocial support services IR 1.6: Displaced/host communities adopt strategies to peacefully manage resources	IR 2.7: Vulnerable households have improved capacity to mitigate trauma. IR 2.8: Households across social groups peacefully manage community conflicts.	IR 3.5: Communities in conflict-prone areas use mechanisms to prevent and peacefully de-escalate conflict.
Cross-cutting Approaches	IR T1: Vulnerable populations in immediate and protracted crises, including women, people with disabilities, younger people, and older people, participate in humanitarian responses that provide safe, dignified, and meaningful access to meet the essential needs of different social groups		
	IR T2: Local humanitarian actors, including national staff and national NGO partners, have the operational capacity and systems to implement coordinated and conflict-sensitive humanitarian responses to meet the needs of vulnerable, crisis-affected households		
	IR T3: Humanitarian interventions prioritize local, market-based solutions for economic recovery		

CRS RESPONSE

Food Security and Livelihoods

CRS will support crisis-affected households with emergency food assistance under its WFP-funded distributions and BHA-funded Darfur Emergency Response Activity (DERA) projects. Where markets are functional and accessible, CRS will prioritize cash and voucher assistance (CVA) to support local markets and empower project participants to prioritize their most urgent needs. If market assessments and participants' preferences indicate in-kind assistance as the most appropriate modality, CRS will distribute commodities using WFP's pipeline and other resources.

Emergency food assistance will target crisis-affected areas of West, Central and East Darfur, where displaced and conflict-affected communities face increased vulnerability and urgent needs. Where appropriate and feasible, CRS will layer this short-term assistance with intermediate and longer-term livelihoods support under its resilience projects, RISING III, Ma'an Aqwa, Sustainable Agrifood Systems Approach for Sudan (SASAS), and the Bina' Aljusr Farmer to Farmer (F2F) project. These efforts include linking people to business skills training, financial services, investment opportunities.

Participating communities will also benefit from supplies and tools to start up and expand agricultural and off-farm income-generating activities, as well as strengthen local value chains. Livelihood support will target vulnerable households in more stable, accessible areas of Sudan. As other areas transition to a protracted crisis, CRS will resume livelihoods support in to promote early recovery and resilience.

Basic Needs in WASH, NFI and Shelter

CRS will provide emergency WASH, NFI and shelter assistance to displaced and conflict-affected households in West, Central, and East Darfur under its BHA-funded Moafa III and DERA Projects in West, Central and East Darfur. Where markets are functional and accessible, CRS will prioritize CVA. If in-kind assistance is determined as the most appropriate modality, CRS will provided affected households with kits of essential household items and materials for constructing shelters and practicing healthy WASH behaviours. During distributions, CRS will integrate social behavior change communication strategies (SBCC) to promote good WASH practices.

In protracted crises, CRS will scale up and enhance SBCC efforts with repeated messaging and engagement of community structures--such as WASH committees and mothers' support groups--to reinforce messages, adoption of healthy behaviors, and management of water points and latrines. CRS will also support health centres improve their WASH infrastructure through rehabilitation and repair of local water points and latrines.

Under its UNICEF-funded PROPECTS II project, CRS will promote WASH in schools and health facilities that serve vulnerable and crisis-affected communities in East Darfur. These activities will include hygiene promotion, distribution of WASH kits, construction or rehabilitation of water points and sanitation facilities in schools, and training of staff on water treatment and water management.



CRS staff addressing the community in Hashaba village, West Darfur, Sudan. Photo by Carlos Barrio/CRS.

Key Takeaways

Priorities for CRS emergency response:

- Food security and livelihoods
- WASH, NFI and Shelter
- Health and nutrition
- Social cohesion
- Psychosocial support

CRS will take a holistic, long-term approach, using adaptive management to respond to the evolving context and changing needs of participants. CRS' strategy layers early recovery, resilience and peacebuilding programs into the early stage of emergency response programming, as Sudan transitions to a protracted crisis and in areas that are more stable.

CRS RESPONSE

Health and Nutrition

CRS will provide emergency health and nutrition services that focus on nutrition screenings for children under five and pregnant and lactating women, as well as distribution of ready-to-use therapeutic foods and supplementary foods to malnourished children. These efforts will take place in crisis-affected communities across West, Central, and East Darfur under Moafa III, DERA, WFP, UNICEF-funded and SHF-funded projects.

CRS will layer this immediate support with SBCC to promote good nutrition practices, capacity strengthening of nutrition staff and mother support groups, and preventative efforts, such as micronutrient supplementation for children under five and pregnant and lactating women. Emergency health support will support mobile clinics and rural health facilities so as to ensure people's access to basic health services. CRS will strengthen the capacity of health facilities through the delivery of medical supplies and training of health facility workers and pharmacists. In East Darfur, CRS will continue to promote child health by organizing health screenings and measles vaccinations in schools under PROSPECTS II.

“It is very important to us to be at peace together. If any problem happens, together we can solve these problems. My hope for the future is stability, and that whenever anybody comes, we can welcome them.”

—Juma Adam Abdalla,
RISING III Project Participant,
West Darfur

Social Cohesion

CRS will facilitate social cohesion and peacebuilding activities that focus on establishing and strengthening the capacity of local peacebuilding communities. This will take place in Central Darfur, through its USAID-funded People-to-People (P2P) peacebuilding project *Insijam*—and all five Darfur states and Gedaref State through resilience projects—EU-funded *Ma'an Aqwa*, *RISING III*, and *SASAS*.

CRS will use its combined support and approach efforts of [Binding, Bonding and Bridging \(3Bs\)](#) and [Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver \(4Ds\)](#) to bring together different groups to contribute to collective community development efforts. CRS conflict analyses have revealed that access to natural resources has historically been a key driver of conflict. As such, these projects' integrate natural resource management and social cohesion as a focus for community action groups (CAGs), who will work together to co-manage issues and conflicts around control of, and access to, natural resources.

To support people's emotional well-being, trauma resilience activities are incorporated into the *Insijam* resilience programming in Central Darfur. This program uses CRS' *Rising from Resilience Roots* curriculum. In East Darfur, under PROSPECTS II, CRS will provide psychosocial support through established referral mechanisms, and assistance for handling child protection issues; train social workers, teachers and parents on recognizing signs and referring protection issues; and equip youth in camps and host communities with knowledge and life skills to mitigate gender-based violence.



In West Darfur, women's perspective and inclusion is a key part of the *Rising III* project, which provides supports food security needs, strengthen social cohesion, and builds resilience for vulnerable communities in Darfur. Photo by Carlos Barrio/CRS



Ahmed Mohamed Ali (left) and Hassan Abdalla Yahia (right) shake hands as a symbol of the positive relationship both groups have in Hashaba village, West Darfur, Sudan, where they work together to solve problems, collaborate for mutual benefit, and envision a harmonious future. Peace building and social cohesion for are integral elements of CRS interventions in the country. Photo by Carlos Barrio/CRS

CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

Key Takeaways

CRS will integrate, support and monitor efforts that promote: integrated gender considerations, safe and dignified programming, local leadership, strong coordination, conflict-sensitive approaches, and market-based strategies.

Gender Integration and Safe and Dignified Programming

In Sudan, CRS has a central monitoring, evaluation, accountability, learning, and program quality (MEAL/PQ) unit, which supports cross-cutting initiatives, such as safe and dignified programming and gender integration. The MEAL/PQ team provides technical support on gender assessments and is leading the development of a Gender Action Plan to ensure all its programming considers the perspectives and address specific needs of all subgroups across the communities in which CRS works. The central MEAL/PQ unit has developed an Accountability Framework with four interdepartmental commitments from 2023 to 2025. These commitments include:

- Strengthening feedback and response mechanisms
- Establishing a country-program-level channel for handling sensitive complaints
- Increasing efficiency and quality of feedback and response mechanisms through digital technology
- Ensuring community feedback on quality and timeliness of goods and services informs supply chain management decisions.

These efforts will facilitate community involvement in how assistance is provided, and ensure they have safe channels to report project concerns and issues.

Local Leadership, Humanitarian Coordination and Conflict Sensitivity

Local and national organizations are often the first actors that people turn to for humanitarian assistance in their communities, and have first-hand knowledge of the context, the trust of the affected community, and personnel and facilities in place close to the crisis. In Sudan, while external access to populations may be impeded by insecurity, local organizations are sometimes the only responders able to reach the most vulnerable communities. In line with the agency's partnership principles and core values of subsidiarity and sustainability, CRS will continue to engage with local actors, including national NGOs, line ministries, and community-based structures across Sudan in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its projects.

To ensure complementarity, CRS participates actively in humanitarian clusters and verifies the presence of other actors operating in overlapping implementation areas. CRS prioritizes an area-based approach where feasible to holistically address families' essential needs in geographic zones not covered by other actors. As a humanitarian organization, CRS follows "do no harm" principles, under which conflict sensitivity is a key consideration. CRS has conducted conflict analyses during the startup of several projects, and used the findings to inform its risk analysis and mitigation measures. CRS also integrates conflict mitigation strategies—such as strengthening of community peacebuilding structures—into its P2P, SASAS, Ma'an Aqwa, RISING III and F2F projects.

Market-based Approaches

Multi-purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) offers a flexible, dignified approach for families to address their priority needs, while supporting recovery of the local economy by contributing to demand for local goods and services. In areas where MPCA is not feasible to cover food needs, CRS will use electronic vouchers through CRS' Cash and Asset Transfer platform developed by RedRose. CRS will base MPCA transfer values on the minimum expenditure basket (MEB), and align its MPCA approach with guidance from the Sudan Cash Working Group. Where cash or voucher modalities are not feasible, CRS will prioritize local and regional procurement of goods to be distributed in kind. CRS will monitor prices in local markets and consult with the joint market monitoring initiative, WFP and the Food Security Sector to mitigate negative impacts on markets and ensure transfer values are appropriate when using cash or voucher modalities.



Juma Adam Abdalla holding two onions he is harvesting at his farm in West Darfur, Sudan. Juma has benefited from agricultural seeds, tools, and farming techniques training. Photo by Carlos Barrio/CRS