

NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

2023 Annual Report

NRC Sudan

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NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

Acknowledgment

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) pays heartfelt tribute to our esteemed colleagues Abubaker Jeddo, our camp manager assistant, and Elsheikh Mohamed Omer, our dedicated community volunteer, who lost their lives in West Darfur in May and June 2023. We also express profound appreciation to all our Sudanese colleagues, past and present, for their resilience, dedication and collaborative spirit amid the most challenging circumstances.

© NRC, January 2024

Norwegian Refugee Council Al Nile Tower Khartoum, Sudan

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Cover photo: Zahra and her children would not have imagined a future like this, living in a public school, sharing a classroom with other families, and sleeping on the ground. © Ahmed Omer/NRC



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Nour-elsham Mussa (25), fled Khartoum while 9 month pregnant and gave birth at the camp. © Ahmed Mahmoud/ NRC

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Foreword

2023 was a terrible time for people in Sudan. The country was already in the throes of a large-scale, protracted and neglected humanitarian crisis at the beginning of the year, and a series of worst-case scenarios that emerged during it quickly led to the largest humanitarian catastrophe on the continent, one in which the capital city became an urban warfare battleground.

Many agencies evacuated from positions around Sudan once airstrikes on Khartoum began. It was difficult to "stay and deliver". We had to tread a different path to relocate our country office, regain entry to Darfur, increase support for locally-led responses in areas that we were not present in and maintain international attention in a complex and cruel situation.

Despite the massive disruption and challenges, we still assisted 445,600 people across almost all of the country's states in 2023. We are grateful for the work of our staff and local responders, and for the humanitarian donors who increased or initiated support for our response.

I look back and remember the sense of hopelessness in late April as evacuations, mass killing and economic collapse happened around us. I recall looking down in West Darfur to see amid the burnt remains of informal shelters for displaced people the bullet-ridden briefcase and travel documents of an elderly man and the shoes of a little girl. I remember seeing the exhausted faces of young local responders operating collective shelters for newly displaced people in White Nile, Gedaref and Al Jazira who had to beg to provide food for the hundreds of people who had sought shelter in a school or university building It felt like tragedy layered upon tragedy. But I also saw our teams and local responders in action, working to provide emergency relief in areas affected by reported ethnic cleansing, battling to get ahead of disease outbreaks in heavily overcrowded areas of urban displacement, rolling out new digital communications channels and mental health apps, negotiating new cross-border supply chains from Chad and Ethiopia and clearing major imports, problem-solving to provide cash-based assistance during a liquidity crisis and collapsing economy, being the first to give hundreds of education-in-emergencies classes and psychosocial support for conflict-affected girls and boys, and bravely speaking truth to power in private and in public.

Last year was terrifying, but it also demonstrated that large-scale and strategic humanitarian assistance was possible. I am proud of our team, and of all the partnerships that enabled us to help hundreds of thousands of people directly and improve the broader humanitarian response in Sudan.

Thank you for your ongoing interest and support.

Carter.

William Carter NRC Sudan Country Director

Women, children and elderly had to walk through stagnant rainwater to access the toilet in an abandoned school reopened as a displacement site in Kosti, White Nile. © Ahmed Omer/NRC



Background

Sudan was grappling with a significant humanitarian crisis before the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, but 10 months of warfare and indiscriminate violence have brought it to an unprecedented and catastrophic level. The destruction of the capital, Khartoum, the burning of most of Darfur's major cities, the sieges of Kordofan's towns and the spread of the conflict to the east have precipitated the country's collapse.

The human cost has been devastating. More than 13,000 lives have been lost, countless homes razed and about a hundred displacement sites reduced to ruins. In Darfur, large scale attacks on civilians based on ethnicity included the mass killing of thousands of Masalit people in few days and forced most of the group's members to flee to Chad. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were widely used as a weapon of war, particularly across Darfur and Khartoum. Parties to the conflict also targeted essential healthcare, electricity, water, telecommunications and fuel infrastructure.



• Thousands of people fled Khartoum and arrived in Khor Ajwal IDP camp in White Nile. But the camp was already overcrowded with little space to accomodate them. © Ahmed Omer/NRC

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The displacement crisis is now one of the largest in the world. By the end of 2023, more than 6 million people have fled within Sudan and 1.4 million across borders. The magnitude of the displacement is such that host communities have exhausted their capacity to absorb influxes, leading to onward displacement and increasingly harsh living conditions. Countless other people are trapped in war zones, as siege-like conditions and poverty prevent them from fleeing.

Humanitarian assistance has never been as needed as it was in 2023. Nearly 17.7 million

people face acute hunger, more than double the figure at the same time a year ago, and the price of basic commodities has skyrocketed. Many essential services have been shut down across the country, depriving generations of children of their education. An estimated 70 per cent of hospitals in conflict affected states were not functioning at a time when the country faced a major health crisis with outbreaks of cholera and measles in Khartoum and the east. The situation has been further aggravated by the freefall of the country's economy, driven by the destruction of the capital and countless businesses, the collapse of the banking system and the disruption of markets.

Local and international aid organisations have worked tirelessly across the country to reset the response. Local responders played a crucial role from the outset, providing vital aid to trapped populations on the frontlines of the conflict. The rise of the locally-led response in some of Sudan's most hard-to-reach and dangerous areas not only served as a lifeline for those affected, but also obliged the humanitarian community to rethink its approach.

The provision of assistance, however, was repeatedly threatened. Parties to the conflict systematically targeted humanitarian assets, particularly in Khartoum, Al Fasher, Al Geneina, Kutum, Al Obeid, Nyala, Wad Madani and Zalengei. At least 262 incidents of violence against personnel and assets were recorded in 2023 and more than 147 offices and warehouses were looted, depriving people of much needed aid. At least 20 aid workers were killed, and local responders were also routinely targeted, harassed, detained and even attacked.

Humanitarian access deteriorated drastically across the country. Cross-border operations were launched from Chad into Darfur, but parties to the conflict denied access to most cross-line assistance. Major bureaucratic and administrative impediments also obstructed the response in the east of the country.

Despite the magnitude of Sudan's crisis, it was one of the most overlooked in 2023, with the international community failing to pull together to de-escalate the conflict, mitigate further harm to civilians and respond to the dire humanitarian situation. As the country descends further into chaos, the world can no longer ignore a crisis whose regional and global impact is growing.

About NRC

The Norwegian Refugee Council is an independent humanitarian organisation that helps people forced to flee their homes. We work in crises across 40 countries, providing lifesaving and long-term assistance to millions of people every year. We stand up for people forced to flee and advocate for their rights.

We returned to Sudan in 2020. We are dedicated to helping people affected by war, protracted displacement and disasters by supporting their survival, protection and dignity. We engage in lifesaving multi-sectoral emergency responses that prioritise cash assistance.

We use technology to improve our programmes, work closely with local partners and grassroots networks.

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Our interventions cover





Livelihoods and Food Security



Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance



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Access to Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Site Management Support

Distribution of hygiene kits in Khor Ajwal IDP camp in White Nile during the rainy season, as multiple disease outbreaks impacted the displaced population. © Ahmed Omer/NRC

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Rapid Response Mechanism

Sudan Humanitarian Fund

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A strategic and operational shift

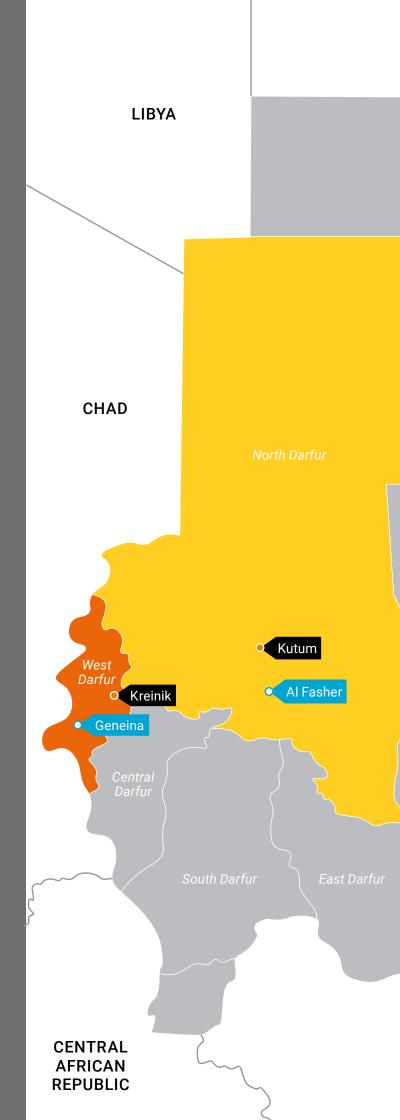
Through about 330 Sudanese and 30 international staff, we assisted about 248,000 people in 2022. Our interventions focused on the emergency response to a growing protection crisis in Darfur, resilience and durable solutions to protracted conflict displacement in Darfur and Kordofan, and ongoing refugee responses. We were operating across six states as of early 2023 – Gedaref, Khartoum, North Darfur, South Kordofan, West Darfur and White Nile.

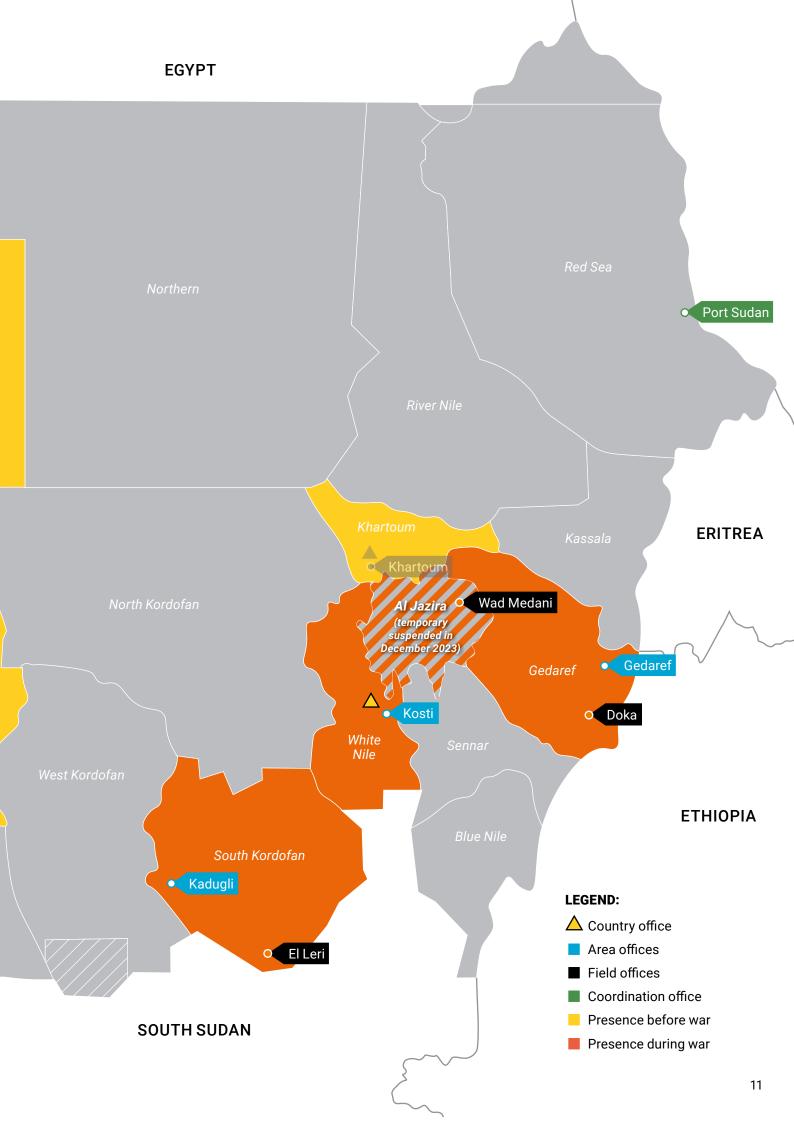
RESTRUCTURING OUR PRESENCE

When the war broke out in April, we restructured our presence based on safety, humanitarian needs and the operational situation.

- We were forced to temporarily suspend our operations in Khartoum, North Darfur and West Darfur in April to prioritise our employees' safety and security. We kept our office opened in Gedaref, White Nile and South Kordofan.
- By May, we had relocated our country office to Kosti in White Nile, and planned our emergency operations from our Gedaref, White Nile and South Kordofan offices.
- In June, we opened a field office in Al Jazira and a coordination office in Port Sudan to facilitate logistics and engagement with authorities.
- In August, we set up a small cell in eastern Chad to facilitate the reopening of our West Darfur office, which reopened fully in September with a permanent presence of Sudanese and international staff.
- As the conflict spread to Al Jazira in December, we were forced to close our office there but continued to deliver assistance from our other offices. We also began missions into Sennar state.









ADAPTING OUR RESPONSE STRATEGY

We quickly shifted our programming to adapt to the rapidly changing situation on the ground. By June we had launched a multi-sectoral emergency response plan intended to support 300,000 people affected by the war by the end of the year. We focused on providing lifesaving assistance and protection to those fleeing to urban centres. We also continued to assist long-term refugees in Gedaref and White Nile.

BEFORE THE WAR.

we focused on people fleeing conflict and disasters and those who had been living in displacement for many years

WHEN THE WAR BROKE OUT

we immediately switched to deliver cash-based assistance, emergency shelter, non-food items (NFIs), water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions and education in emergencies

self-reliant. As some public services were still available and markets were functioning, we strove to adopt markets-based approaches at the local level.

Our objective was to alleviate their hardship but also

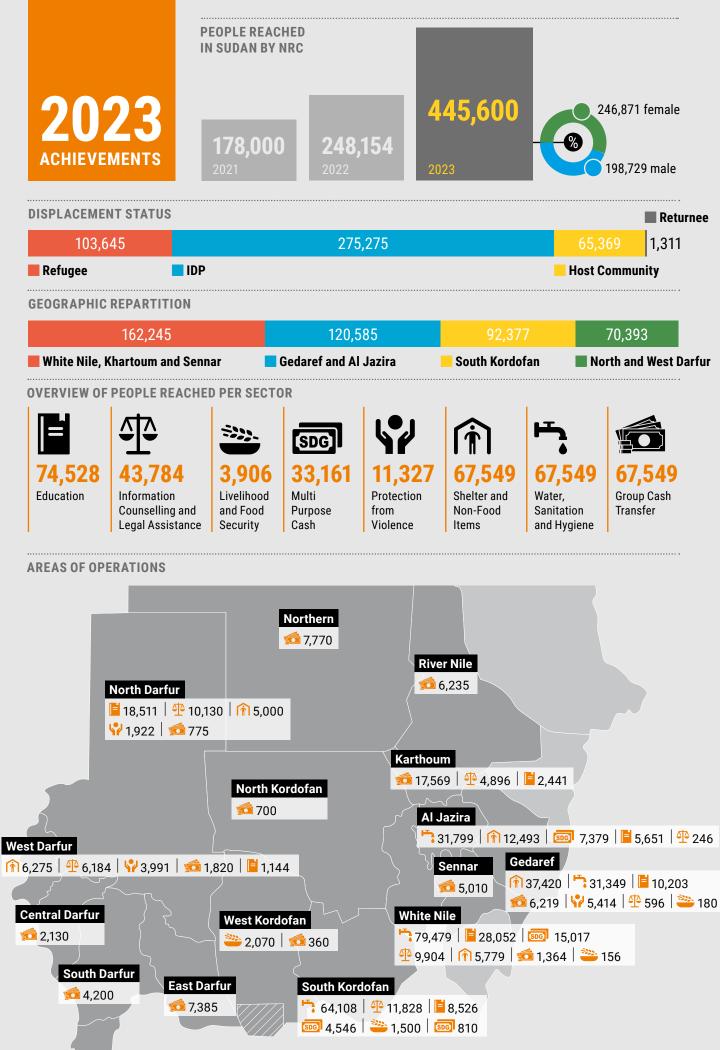
equip them to achieve durable solutions and become

BY OCTOBER

we had complemented our response with protection-related services

We built our response around three key principles: urgency, dignity and agility, to ensure we provided timely support for the most vulnerable.

We coordinated and managed displacement sites in the east of the country, provided individual protection assistance for vulnerable cases and scaled up ICLA to empower displaced people with timely information and securing legal stay. We also reinforced our mechanisms to ensure our accountability to affected populations.





NRC Emergency Cash distribution to internally displaced in Kosti, White Nile. © Ahmed Omer / NRC

🗧 Emergency response

- NRC set up a rapid response mechanism (RRM) with international NGO partners in 2022 to provide lifesaving support to displaced people within the first 14 days of a crisis. When the war broke out, we scaled up the mechanism to deploy a team of trained staff and volunteers to affected areas, conduct assessments and provide support.
- Our emergency response covered the responses to Khartoum's mass displacement in Al Jazira, White Nile and Gedaref, to Kadugli's new displacement in South Kordofan and to Al Jazira's conflict in Sennar, White Nile, and Gedaref. It also included the response to flash floods in White Nile and Gedaref, and the response to the cholera outbreak in Gedaref, White Nile and Al Jazira.
- Overall, our partnership with Save the Children and the Danish Refugee Council allowed the RRM to cover Al Jazirah, Central Darfur, Gedaref, North Kordofan, North Darfur, River Nile, South Kordofan and White Nile.

Cash assistance

- In the midst of Sudan's liquidity crisis, we were one of the first organisations to provide cash assistance, reaching displaced people in Gedaref, White Nile and even South Kordofan while all access to the city of Kadugli was cut off.
- When it was feasible and safe to do so, we offered multi-purpose cash assistance to allow people to meet their immediate basic needs on their own terms. We supported people living in collective shelters and gathering sites and those staying with host communities.
- We also chose to prioritise cash assistance to boost the recovery of local markets, including grants for small traders based on a market analysis.
- To support the locally-led response and reach populations in areas where we did not have a physical presence, we launched cash transfers to frontline responders, enabling them to organise distributions, shelters and education support based on the needs identified.

Shelter and NFIs

- As millions of people were uprooted and forced to shelter in public buildings we provided emergency shelter assistance such as tarpaulins, tools and family tents, and Non Food Items kits that included blankets, mosquito nets, plastic sheets, solar lamps, jerry cans, sleeping mats and kitchen sets.
- We set up emergency tents and temporary kitchens in camps that were receiving Ethiopian, Eritrean and other refugees displaced from Khartoum, and when relevant we offered cash for rent and cash for shelter repair.
- In anticipation of the rainy season, we provided technical support for flood mitigation in sites for internally displaced people and refugees.

WASH

- To provide decent living conditions in displacement, we worked to improve access to adequate safe water, sanitation and hygiene in collaboration with the authorities and displaced communities themselves.
- As the rainy season set in, a cholera outbreak was declared and other diseases spread in Gedaref, Al Jazira and White Nile. We led a public health Water Sanitation and Hygiene response in gathering sites and refugee camps in the three states, involving the repair of water supply networks, the creation of water points, the de-sludging, repair and construction of latrines, the distribution of hygiene kits and awareness-raising campaigns.
- In South Kordofan we were able to set up a longer-term Water Sanitation and Hygiene response, with the installation of water tanks in displacement camps and sanitation facilities in schools.

The population of Alagaya refugee camps in White Nile doubled, as thousands of South Sudanese refugees fled Khartoum to the camps. But the living conditions are so poor that about thousand of South Sudanese refugee children died of measles and other related disease between April and July 2023. © Ahmed Omer / NRC





As part of the Better Learning Program, displaced children in White Nile are introduced to the education novel 'the Journey of Miskit,' a tale that explores the resilience and hope of those forced to flee. © Ahmed Omer/NRC

Education

- ➡ The war completely shut down the education system. We created safe and welcoming spaces for children fleeing the fighting where they were able to reconnect with learning and process the trauma they had experienced.
- We set up educational centres and trained parents and teachers, including from among the displaced population, in emergency curricula that integrate psychosocial support into education. We supported teachers with incentives, facilitated peer-to-peer support and provided materials and equipment.
- → We supported the primary education of Ethiopian refugees in Gedaref's camps.
- In December we launched our Better Learning Programme app, a digital version of our class curriculum to help parents, teachers and other caregivers to better understand the impact of trauma on children and provide exercises to help reduce stress and promote learning.

Information

- Many of those fleeing had to leave their civil and legal documents behind, or did not have any in the first place, hampering their access to basic services and their ability to move on in search of safety. In collaboration with the civil registry, we raised awareness and counselled displaced communities, including refugees, on how to obtain legal documents such as national identity cards and birth and marriage certificates.
- → We promoted access to essential services and helped to mitigate and resolve labour and employment disputes.

Protection from violence

- ➡ Large-scale displacement led to the rapid and often improvised creation of gathering sites in the middle of cities. We set up site management programming in Gedaref and Al Jazira to register displaced people, map assistance gaps, coordinate the delivery of services among aid organisations and increase communities' role in the response.
- We set up inclusive community committees, ensuring the active participation of women, to provide feedback on needs and the quality of the response.



Livelihoods and food security

- → We helped refugees, IDPs and vulnerable host communities to meet their basic food needs in areas where food insecurity was high.
- We worked to improve income-earning opportunities through small-scale farming projects and small business initiatives such as mechanics and tailoring in South Kordofan and with young Ethiopian refugees in Gedaref.
- → We worked with displaced people in semirural areas and refugees in camps on how to create self-sufficient and sustainable gardens, and we provided smallholders with agricultural inputs.

Amani and her family had to flee Khartoum to Al-Jabalain in White Nile, but her new shelter was destroyed by flooding during the rainy season. © Ahmed Omer/NRC





Hundreds of people now live in this school in Gedaref, between the classrooms and the school yard, since they had to flee the war in Khartoum. © Ahmad Mahmoud/ NRC

Accountability to affected populations

In 2022 we set up our digital communication hub (DCH), an innovative two-way information-sharing platform with the people we serve. It provided information through voice calls and bulk SMS available in English, Arabic, Tigrinya and Amharic. Callers were also able to leave messages to request further information, log and follow up on complaints and provide feedback on our activities. After the outbreak of war, the toll-free hotline was disrupted as a result of damage to telecommunications systems. To adapt to the new situation and meet the needs of a population more familiar with digital service, we transferred the DCH onto WhatsApp and launched the new version of the service in October.

Advocacy

- Despite the unprecedented nature of Sudan's crisis, the international community has largely overlooked it. We pressed the world's leaders to step up, ensure the parties to the conflict respect international humanitarian law and adequately fund the response.
- Our advocacy also targeted the humanitarian system, pushing for a more principled, efficient and inclusive response. We participated in the first humanitarian conference for Sudan, organized by local responders and advocated for donors and international humanitarian organizations to recognize and support the work of mutual aid actors and local volunteers in Sudan.
- ➢ We prioritised public advocacy through international media and events. Our positioning on the crisis was mentioned in over 5,600 news articles about Sudan on the web and we were featured in 106 broadcast media (radio and TV), including top tier outlets.
- We published a report that reviewed the humanitarian response after the first 100 days of war and a regional overview of the displacement crisis.



- Faced with an ever changing and increasingly complex situation, we invested in analysis to inform and provide nuance to our positioning, programming and operational choices, particularly on questions related to the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, displacement, housing, land and property (HLP) rights and conflict sensitivity.
- ➡ For the benefit the humanitarian community, we worked in partnership with ACAPS on the Sudan Analysis Hub and supported the ACAPS scenarios building exercise. We also commissioned an in-depth research initiative that assesses macroeconomic challenges and the state of the financial system, and analyses the key risks for humanitarian programming and operations.

ンピ ア Coordination

- With scarce resources and records needs, humanitarian coordination became all the more important with the outbreak of war. Our approach to coordination goes beyond participation, and we dedicated resources, knowledge and expertise at the strategic level to a number of forums. We co-chaired the site management group, the strategic advisory group of the Refugee Coordination Forum, the protection sector and the HLP rights sub-sector.
- We led several workstreams in access and protection coordination, and we contributed significantly to the international NGO forum as part of its steering committee at the country and state level.

Monitoring and evaluation

After the war broke out, we made sure to develop protocols to guarantee that aid reached those in need and resources were used efficiently in such times. We conducted community focus group discussions and key informant interviews during project preparation to include beneficiaries in decision making.



Two local volunteers working in the kitchen in a reception site in Wad Madani. ©Ahmed Omer / NRC

- We conducted 32 post-distribution monitoring exercises, trained 10 national partners in monitoring and evaluation, and oversaw protection mainstreaming and achievement reporting.
- We processed 1,208 complaints and feedback cases through suggestion boxes, a toll-free hotline while it was working, in-person and via the WhatsApp DHC.



NRC first emergency distribution end of May 2023, in Al Jazira, a food donation to local volunteers and collective kitchens who supported IDPs fleeing from Khartoum. © Ahmed Omer/NRC



Partnersnips

- Building on the local partnerships we already had in place before the war, we further developed our relationships with local organisations, including via mutual aid networks.
- → We signed local partnership implementation agreements for interventions in WASH, education and livelihoods and food security.
- Our national partners include The Sudanese Environment Conservation Society (SECS), the Sudanese Organization for Relief and Recovery (SORR), Peace Light for Rural Development (PLRD), HOPE and Friendship for Development Organization, Baldna for Development Organization, Green Dream Organization and the Ministry of Health. Together we reached 25,100 people.
- We worked in three consortiums with Save the Children, the Danish Refugee Council and ACAPS on the RRM, education and protection.



- The looting of our facilities and assets in Khartoum and West Darfur, limited access to cash, delays in digital transfers, the collapse of the formal financial system and the breakdown in telecommunications disrupted our response capacity. To restock, we set up a dedicated import pipeline and procured nearly 20,000 NFI kits through Port Sudan and across the border from Ethiopia.
- → We worked closely with bank partners and the private sector to enable our cash response from the earliest days of the war.



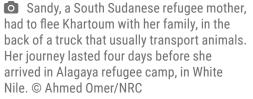
Security and safety

Sixty-five per cent of our staff had already been trained in safety and incident management before the war, and we resumed our in-house hostile environment integrated security training (HEIST) in Kosti in November.



Compliance

We established a risk and compliance unit in 2022. Among other tasks, it has been digitising our document archives and leading our accounting process, including our annual audit and five project audits. Despite the war, the unit carried out three donor risk assessments, three project audits and a review of our internal risk register in 2023. It also led NRC's annual global audit.





Publications

STORIES

Sudan: Updates from the Ground https://bit.ly/30gLIKn

• Diary of an aid worker https://bit.ly/3SeZqhW

Sudan: the month when hell broke out https://bit.ly/3SvRr1i

Sudan: One hundred days of war https://bit.ly/3vKHzrH Invisible: Sudan regional Displacement Crisis https://bit.ly/3Se5Vl1 Beneath the surface: Exploring the economic dynamics of Sudan's crisis <u>https://bit.ly/3Se5VI1</u>

Statements and Op-Ed

Urging More Aid, Solidarity and Attention to Sudan Crisis – joint statement <u>https://bit.ly/42ecpFt</u> The New Humanitarian: As Sudan's humanitarian crisis deepens, donors must dig deeper <u>https://bit.ly/48NsAvB</u>

TRT: The world must not ignore Sudan's humanitarian catastrophe https://bit.ly/497HVad

Videos

#TogetherForSudan

Assessments

Al Jazira conflict (Dec 2023) Rapid Needs assessments in:

- Second Se
- Sennar <u>https://bit.ly/3vV4Ebn</u>
- White Nile <u>https://bit.ly/3ShD4fZ</u>

Accountability for Affected population: NRC Digital Assessment (August 2023) <u>https://bit.ly/42cjC8K</u>

Sudan War: Displacement in Wad Madani Assessment (April 2023) https://bit.ly/3vL4bYZ

Finance – 2023 Budget

Breakdown per activities

Activities	Budget in USD	Budget Share [%]
Education	3,150,546	13
Emergency Response	6,187,150	26
Livelihood and Food Security	783,672	3
ICLA	1,921,618	8
Protection from Violence	959,778	4
Shelter and NFIs	1,033,400	7
Water and Sanitation	1,033,400	3
Advocacy & Research	335,098	1
Support to operations	7,927, 627	33
TOTAL	24,035,746	

Breakdown per Areas of Operation

Areas	Budget in USD
Country office	10,236,450
White Nile, Khartoum, Sennar	2,691,290
Gedaref, Al Jazira	4,860,450
South Kordofan	1,806,580
North Darfur	1,998,130
West Darfur	2,442,844

Support from our donors

Donors	Contribution in USD	Percentage of the overall budget
European Union (ECHO)	5,272,354	22
European Union (EEAS)	677,430	3
Education Cannot Wait (ECW)	1,431,027	6
Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)	314,063	1
French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs	200,000	1
German Federal Foreign Office (GFF0)	1,204,663	5
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA)	2,522,292	11
Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF)	461,377	2
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	4,323,944	18
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	2,049,345	9
UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)	2,428,332	10
USAID	3,159,914	13
TOTAL	24,035,746	

Our donors

Our work is possible thanks to the generous support of our donors:



