UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

SUDAN

SUDAN SITUATION: COUNTRY SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

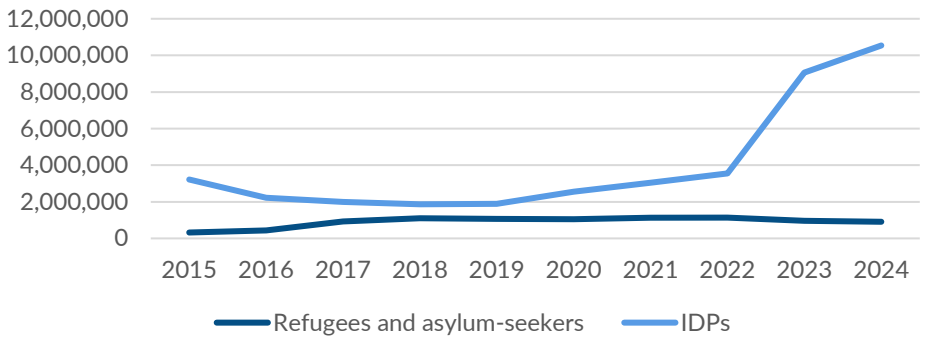
January 2025

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 11.7 million people have been forcibly displaced since April 2023, including over 8.6 million newly displaced internally and over 3.1 million refugees, asylum seekers and returnees who have crossed Sudan's borders into neighbouring countries. Sudan now has the largest number of internally displaced people globally – over 11.3 million including those who were displaced before the current conflict.[1]

At the same time, Sudan's long history of generously hosting refugees continues despite the ongoing conflict. The country continues to have a sizeable refugee population, with 874,493 refugees and asylum seekers, making it the second largest refugee hosting country on the African continent. Since the outbreak of the conflict over 264,000 refugees and asylum seekers living in Sudan have been secondarily displaced. The refugees hosted in Sudan mainly come from South Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, and Ethiopia, as well as the Central African Republic, Chad and Yemen, with 32% of the population living out of camps and 68% settled in them. Since the outbreak of the conflict, 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.

Figure 1: Displacement trends, Sudan (2015-2024)



Source: UNHCR Population Statistics

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 camps. An estimated 258,129 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, WASH facilities, 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.

[1] UNHCR Operational Data Portal: Sudan Situation (2024)

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 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. The Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 anticipates that 30.4 million people— over half the population — will require assistance in 2025. Among them are 16 million children.

Sudan is also home to an estimated 11,359,005 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of 21 November 2024, including those displaced both before and after the outbreak of conflict. Prior to the onset of conflicts on 15 April 2023, Sudan already hosted an estimated 3,820,772 IDPs. Most were displaced across the Darfur states, with many being displaced due to conflict beginning in 2003 and 2004. Of these IDPs displaced prior to 15 April 2023, an estimated 28 per cent (1,080,821 IDPs) experienced secondary or tertiary displacement due to armed clashes after 15 April 2023, while approximately 2,739,951 IDPs reportedly remained in their initial areas of displacement. An estimated 8,619,054 individuals were displaced internally since 15 April 2023. While displacement before 15 April 2023 was primarily concentrated within Darfur and Kordofan states, displacement after 15 April 2023 was more widespread. IDPs originated from all 18 states in Sudan and were displaced to 9,269 locations in 183 localities, across all 18 states in Sudan. Khartoum represents the top state of origin for IDPs: an estimated 33% of all IDPs in Sudan reportedly originated from Khartoum, followed by South Darfur (19%), and North Darfur (14%) states.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Displacement

Before April 2023, Sudan hosted around 1.14M refugees originating mostly from South Sudan and some from Eritrea and Ethiopia. After April 2023, many left their residence within Sudan. As of September 2024, 874,493 refugees were still inside Sudan, out of which 264,000 have been verified to be relocated within Sudan while around 200,000 are expected to have left Sudan to neighbouring and third countries. Out of the 258,000 self-relocated refugees inside Sudan, the major movements were to White Nile (accounting for 79% of all movements) with the remainder mostly going to Red Sea and Gedaref. The movement happened primarily from Khartoum, East and South Darfur, West and North Kordofan, including some from Aj Jazirah and Sennar.

Figure 2: Location of refugees in Sudan, by State

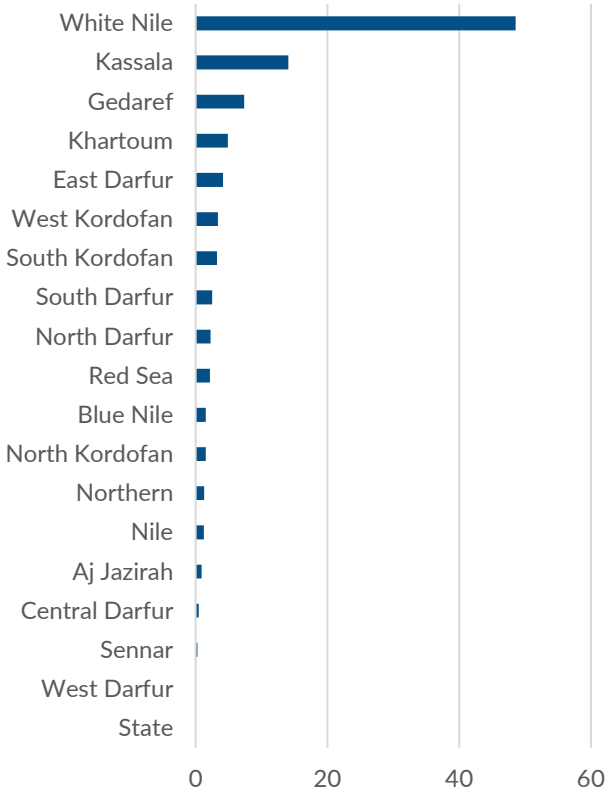
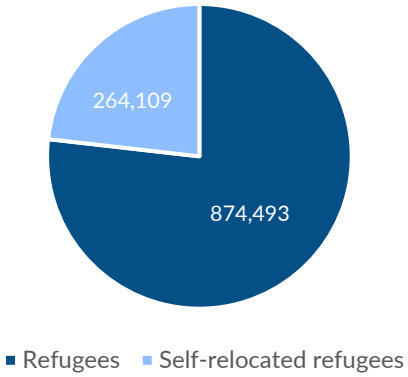


Figure 3: Refugees and self-relocation within Sudan



Source: UNHCR registration data

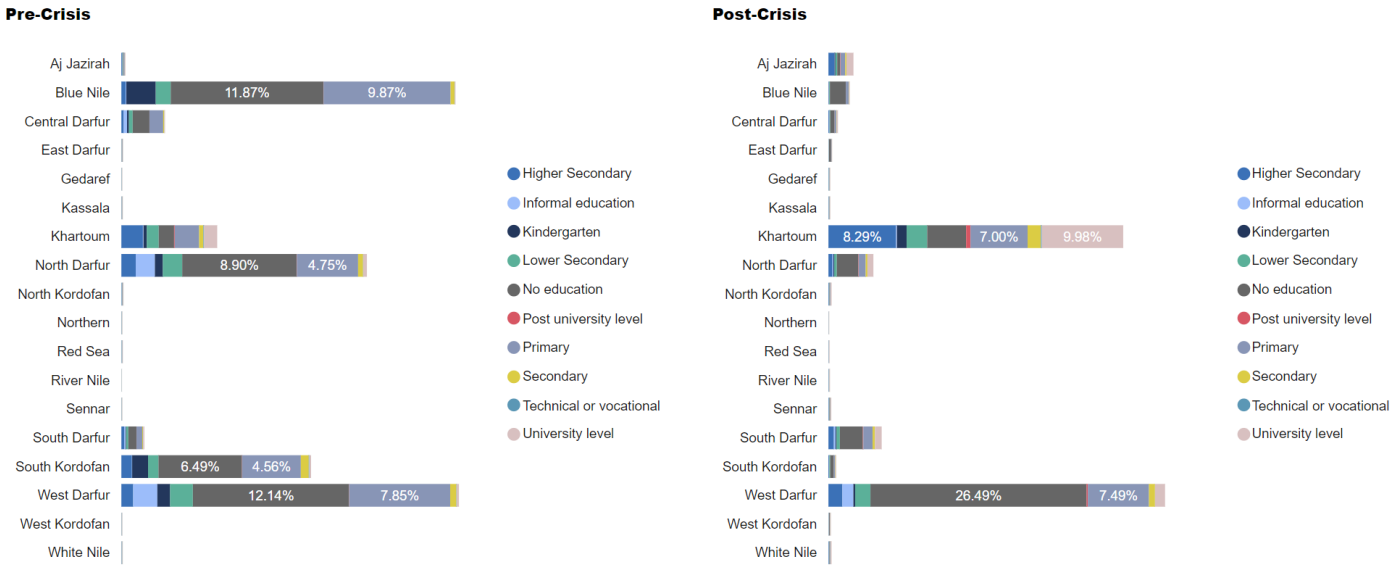
Among Sudanese who fled Sudan, West Darfur was the most common state of origin before April 2023, however, the greatest number of new refugees came from Khartoum. These trends suggest the crisis in April 2023 had a significant impact on the displacement patterns in and outside of Sudan, with some areas like Khartoum becoming the major source of Sudanese refugees after April 2023. Khartoum saw a major spike in refugee numbers post-crisis, jumping from 8% to 43%. West Darfur also saw a notable increase from 26% to 33%. Many regions saw a significant decline in refugee percentages post-crisis, such as Blue Nile and South Kordofan. There were relatively minor increases in regions like Aj Jazirah, White Nile, and Sennar post-crisis.

Before April 2023, 43% of registered Sudanese refugees outside of Sudan had recorded no education, with the highest proportions from conflict-affected areas like West Darfur, Blue Nile, North Darfur, and South Kordofan. 31% had primary education, especially from Blue Nile, West Darfur, North Darfur, and South Kordofan. Lower secondary education accounted for 7%, with notable representation from Khartoum, North Darfur, and West Darfur. Higher secondary education was 6%, predominantly in Khartoum, North Darfur, and West Darfur. Secondary education was 2%, most common in Khartoum and North Darfur. University education was under 2 %, mainly concentrated in Khartoum.

After April 2023, 41% of registered Sudanese refugees reported having no education, with the highest percentages from West Darfur (26%), Khartoum (5%), and South Kordofan (3%). 18% of refugees had primary education, particularly notable in Khartoum (7%) and West Darfur (7%). 14.5%

reported having university education, mainly from Khartoum (9.98%) and Aj Jazirah (0.85%). Higher Secondary Education accounted for 12.6%, with significant numbers from Khartoum (8.29%). 5.8% had lower secondary education, primarily from Khartoum (2.52%). Only 3.3% had completed secondary education, with higher counts from Khartoum (1.63%). Kindergarten attendance was very low, while informal education was at 1.8%, mainly in West Darfur (1.36%). Very few refugees reported post-university (0.88%) or technical/vocational education (0.15%).

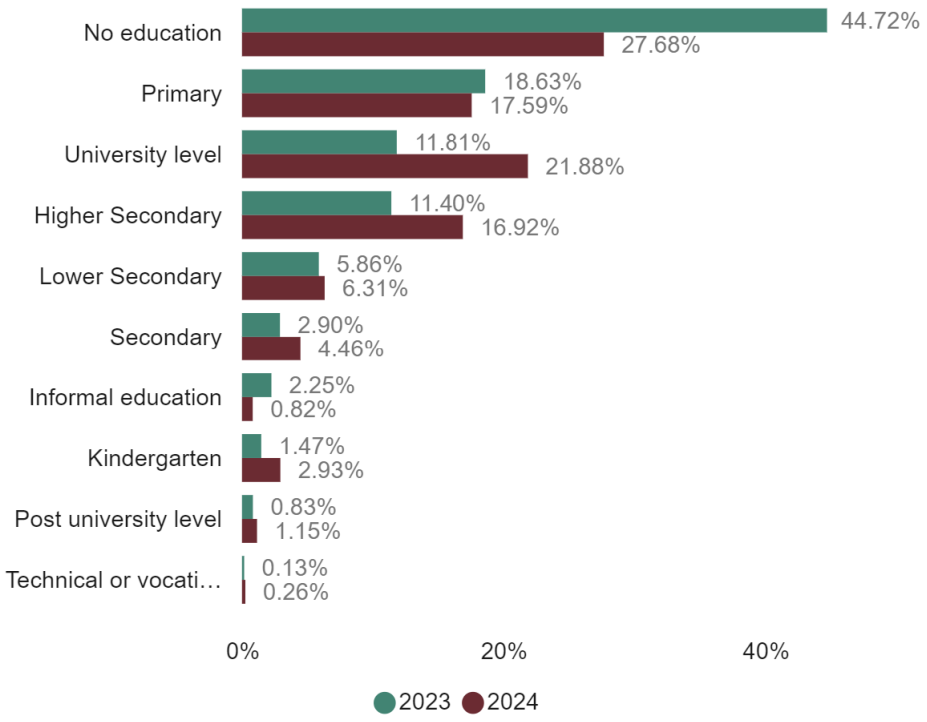
Figure 4: Education level for Sudanese refugees outside of Sudan (pre/post April 2023)



Source: UNHCR registration data

Compared to pre-April 2023 more university level and higher secondary education level individuals left Sudan, especially from Khartoum but also from South Darfur, North Darfur and Aj Jazirah compared to other states. There was a substantial increase in the percentage of people with university-level education and higher secondary education leaving Sudan in 2024, indicating a possible "brain drain" where more educated individuals are migrating, possibly due to seeking better opportunities or escaping worsening conditions.

Figure 5: Education level for Sudanese refugees outside of Sudan (2023/2024)



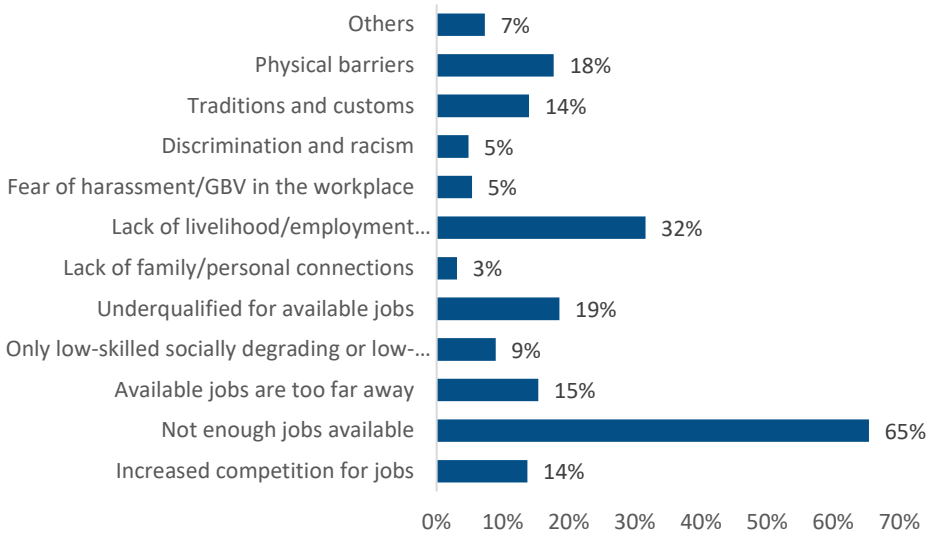
Source: UNHCR registration data

Sudan Multisector Needs Assessment (2024)

The 2024 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA), coordinated by OCHA, was led by IOM-DTM for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and UNHCR for refugees. Data collection involved a combination of face-to-face and remote (phone-based) interviews across Sudan, ensuring representative household-level data from both displaced and non-displaced populations. This section focuses on the socioeconomic and livelihood findings for Sudanese nationals, both internally displaced and non-displaced. A total of approximately 22,000 households are included in the analysis.

Few jobs are available due to the ongoing crisis, particularly for women. Contributing factors include the lack of livelihoods, physical barriers, underqualification, discrimination, and fear of harassment in the workplace. These issues persist across nearly all states.

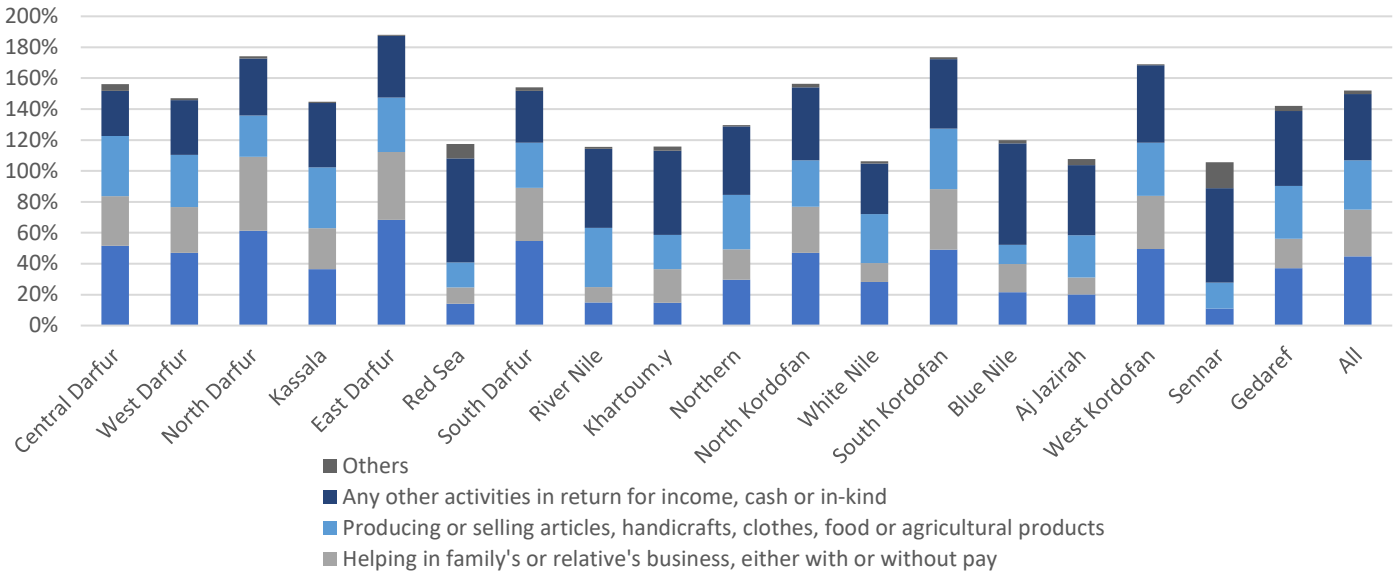
Figure 6 : Obstacle in finding job for women, Sudanese nationals (IDPs and hosts)



Source: MSNA (2024)

The majority of households depend on informal or piecework activities, such as household chores, agricultural work, or support to animal care, often done for cash or in-kind payments. Around 32% engage in small-scale production or sale of clothes, handicrafts, or agricultural products. People in states like Red Sea, River Nile, Khartoum, Blue Nile, and Sennar are involved in a wide range of income-generating activities, while those in Darfur and Kordofan states rely on household or farm labor.

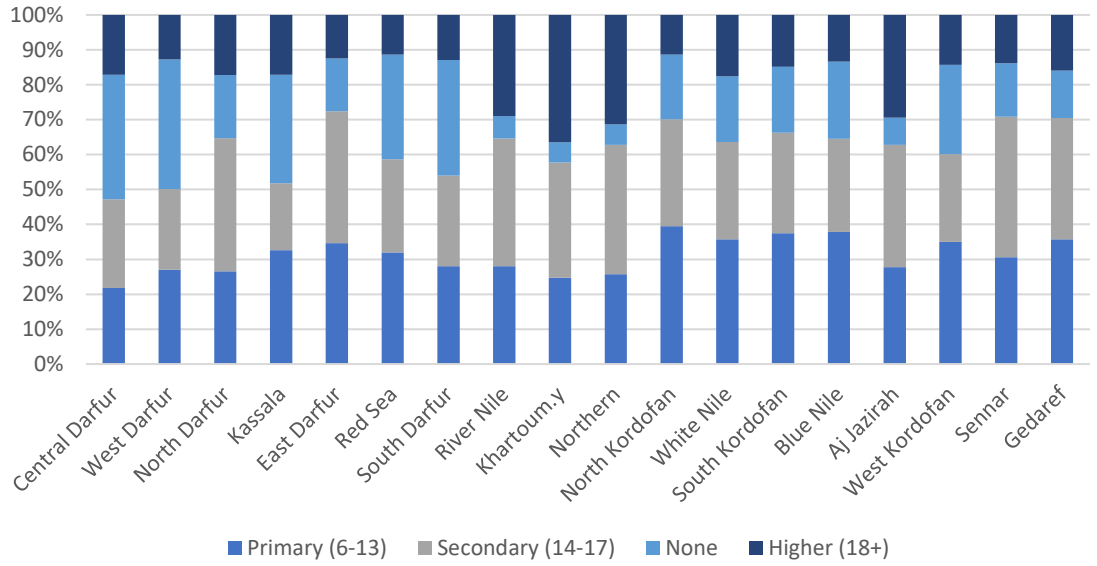
Figure 7: Involvement in Livelihood Activities, by State, Sudanese nationals (IDPs and hosts)



Source: MSNA (2024)

In terms of education, 31% of surveyed households reported primary education as the highest level attained, followed by 30% with secondary education. Approximately 17% have higher education, such as university degrees, while about one-quarter have no formal education. Across most states, the levels of primary and secondary education are similar, but Khartoum, Aj Jazirah, River Nile, and Northern States have a higher proportion of people with tertiary education.

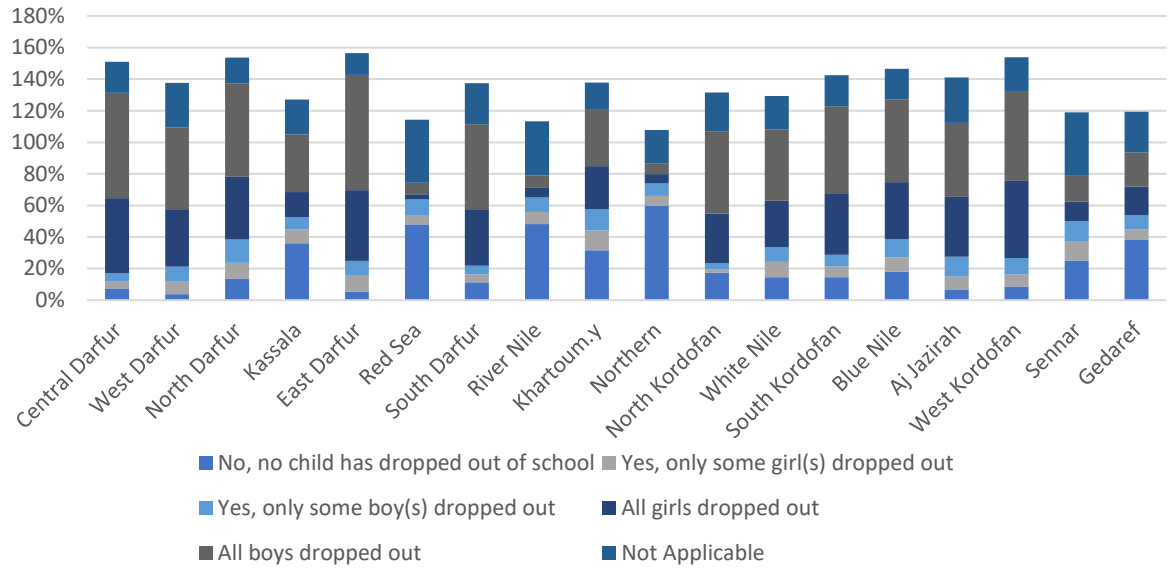
Figure 8: Highest Level of Education, by State, Sudanese nationals (IDPs and hosts)



Source: MSNA (2024)

Since the onset of the conflict, boys have experienced a higher dropout rate than girls due to risks associated with attending school and potential recruitment into armed groups. Many schools are no longer operational, and dropout rates for girls remain high as well. However, 20% of households reported that no child had dropped out. States like Darfur and Kordofan have the highest dropout rates for both boys and girls, while states such as Northern, River Nile, Kassala, and Gedaref report lower dropout rates.

Figure 9: School Aged Drop out since Conflict, by State, Sudanese nationals (IDPs and hosts)



Source: MSNA (2024)

Additional findings from employment and livelihoods:

- **Income Fluctuation**: A significant portion of households (61.7%) experienced a reduction in their monthly income over the past 30 days, suggesting financial instability and reliance on inconsistent income sources. Only 26.9% reported that their income had remained steady (MSNA 2024)
- **Access to Financial Services**: In terms of access to financial services, liquidity (32.5%) and mobile money (28.7%) are the most common, while fewer households have access to traditional financial services such as banks (9.7%) and ATMs (0.8%) (MSNA 2024).
- **Humanitarian Assistance**: About 51.8% of households received humanitarian assistance in the past 12 months. The types of assistance received include food support (29.3%), health support (8.0%), non-food items (7.8%), and water support (7.4%) (MSNA 2024).
- **Challenges in Access to Agricultural Land**: Nearly half of households (46.7%) reported having no access to agricultural land in the past six months. Physical barriers (29.5%) and security concerns (25.5%) were cited as the primary reasons for this lack of access, indicating significant challenges to livelihood through agriculture (MSNA 2024).

Sudan Rural Household Survey 2023

The Sudan 2023 Rural Household Survey Report provides a comprehensive assessment of the socioeconomic impacts of ongoing armed conflict on rural households in Sudan. The report, a collaboration between the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), examines multiple dimensions of livelihoods and welfare, including income, employment, food security, market access, and exposure to shocks.

Key Findings:

1. Socioeconomic Disruptions

Rural Livelihoods: The conflict, which escalated in April 2023, has severely disrupted the economic activities of rural households. The main income sources have been drastically affected, with significant reductions in wages, agricultural output, and market access. Many households are unable to generate income, especially from non-agricultural jobs, and there has been a shift toward dependence on agricultural work and remittances.

Employment Loss: A large proportion of rural households have experienced job losses, particularly in non-agricultural sectors. The number of households without employment or income increased dramatically due to the conflict. Many salaried workers have transitioned to more precarious wage labor, which has led to a substantial decline in household income.

2. Migration Dynamics

Demographic Shifts: Migration patterns show that female-headed households, larger families, and households led by younger individuals or those with higher education levels are more likely to migrate. The internal displacement has also been high within conflict-affected states, particularly in Khartoum, Blue Nile, and North Darfur.

3. Food Security

Severe Food Insecurity: The ongoing conflict has worsened food insecurity, with approximately 37% of the population experiencing high levels of food insecurity. Disruptions in agricultural production and market access, along with rising input costs and transportation challenges, have reduced food availability and increased prices.

Coping Mechanisms: Many households have adopted negative coping strategies to survive, such as reducing food intake, selling household assets, and relying on remittances. However, these strategies have long-term negative impacts on household resilience and well-being.

4. Agricultural and Market Disruptions

Agricultural Challenges: The report highlights that farming activities across Sudan have been heavily impacted. Households have reported significant difficulties in acquiring agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers) and accessing labor, due to both rising prices and movement restrictions.

Market Access: Conflict-related disruptions have severely hampered market access for rural households. A significant number of households are unable to buy or sell goods, either due to high prices or inability to access markets safely.

5. Exposure to Shocks

Conflict-related Shocks: Rural households face a variety of shocks, including personal shocks (illnesses, deaths), conflict-related shocks (theft, violence), and natural shocks (climate variability). The complexity of these shocks has made recovery more difficult, particularly for those in high-intensity conflict areas like Darfur and Khartoum.

Vulnerabilities: Vulnerable groups, such as women-headed households and large families, have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. Many households in conflict-affected regions report deteriorating security and physical safety.