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North Kordofan: pre-crisis and current situation

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HOW HAS THE CURRENT CONFLICT AFFECTED NORTH KORDOFAN?

On 15 April 2023, violence broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (OCHA 15/08/2023). The violence that started in Khartoum quickly spread to other states, including North Kordofan, resulting in deaths, mass displacement, and the breakdown of essential services (ACLED 11/08/2023). North Kordofan is a logistical hub, with key roads and an airport connecting Khartoum to Darfur region, and is a strategic export route for agricultural products, oil, and gold (UNDP 05/2010; Global Echo 07/07/2023). It also hosts government offices and private and public institutions that serve community members and local business interests (UNDP 05/2010).

In North Kordofan, the SAF and the RSF have clashed on various occasions, leading to the closure of the road from Omdurman to Bara, which the RSF uses as a smuggling and supply route in and out of Khartoum. On 24 July, the SAF announced that any motorised presence on the road would attract military action (Al Taghyeer 24/07/2023; ACLED 11/08/2023). A citywide RSF blockade in El Obeid (the capital of North Kordofan) aggravates the civilian impact of the violence (Radio Dabanga 08/08/2023). As at 30 June, El Obeid had been under RSF siege for 40 days. The RSF has checkpoints and roadblocks set up along key routes, restricting the access and movement of people and essential goods (MEE 30/06/2023). The airport in El Obeid, a key transport hub between eastern states and Darfur, has also been destroyed, constraining the free movement of people and goods. Besides the besiegement of the city, heavy shelling and artillery activities in the area have destroyed critical infrastructure and disrupted movement

in North Kordofan (UN Women 05/07/2023; Protection Cluster 18/09/2023). Armed group activities around main access routes further constrain the flow of goods and supplies (Dabanga 30/08/2023).

The concentration of hostilities in North Kordofan's urban centres, such as El Obeid, increases the risk and impact of violence on the populations present in the state (Protection Cluster 18/09/2023; Dabanga 19/09/2023). Before the conflict, there were 9,790 refugees and asylum seekers in the state; as at 15 June, an additional 2,096 refugees fleeing the violence in Khartoum had been secondarily displaced to North Kordofan (UNHCR 15/03/2023 and 05/06/2023).

The armed conflict in North Kordofan is likely to become more complex as it takes on an ethnic dimension. Instances of ethnic militias either joining the ranks of conflicting parties or taking up arms against them as the conflict prolongs further complicate the nature of the hostilities between the RSF and the SAF (ACLED 11/08/2023; The Guardian 12/05/2023). Regional conflicts have historically affected North Kordofan (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023). Recent RSF activities in the state have led to sporadic clashes with local armed tribal groups, resulting in civilian deaths, displacement, and property loss. The RSF has also mounted several military checkpoints along the Omdurman-El Obeid road (Dabanga 24/07/2023). As the conflicts become more localised in North Kordofan because of clashes between the SAF and the RSF, humanitarian needs and protection concerns increase for the affected population (OCHA accessed 02/10/2023; Protection Cluster 18/09/2023).

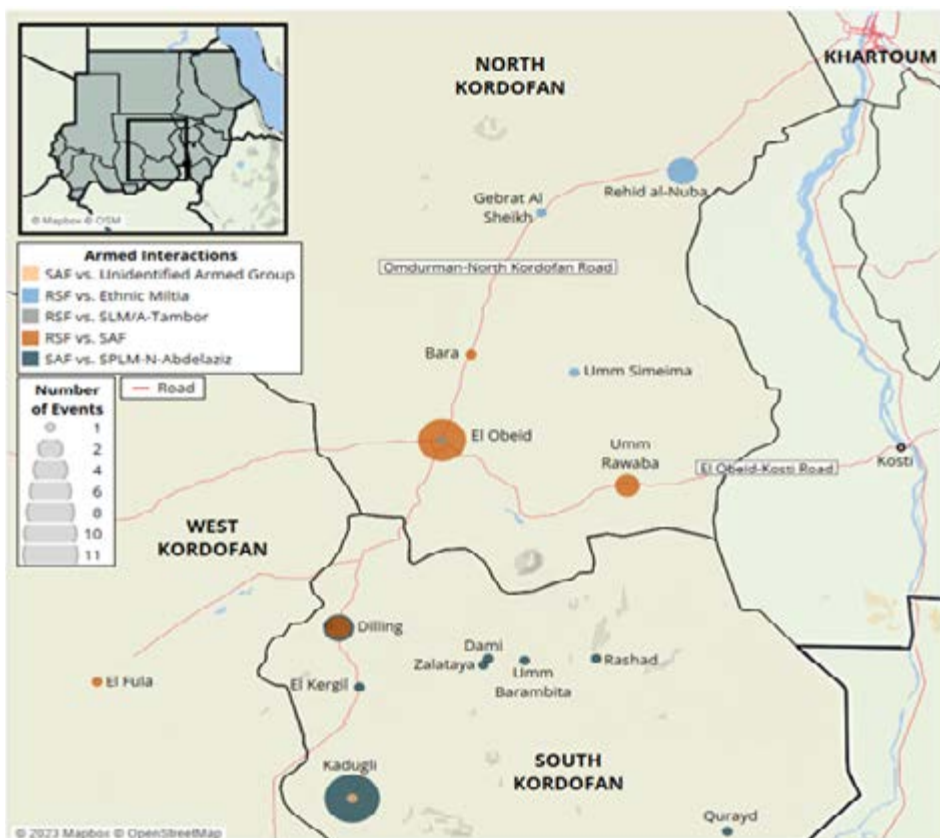
The Governor of North Kordofan has imposed several measures to quell the violence, including a dusk-to-dawn curfew, a motorcycle ban, and the closure of the Bara-Omdurman road connecting North Kordofan to Khartoum (ACLED 11/08/2023; Dabanga 03/08/2023; OCHA 15/08/2023).

Information gaps

- Pre-crisis and current information specific to North Kordofan is limited, as much of the information focuses on the general Kordofan region.
- There is scarce information on the current WASH status in North Kordofan and how the situation has evolved.
- There is limited information available on North Kordofan's pre-crisis humanitarian access constraints.

Attacks on civilians

Map 1: fighting in Kordofan 1 July - 4 August 2023

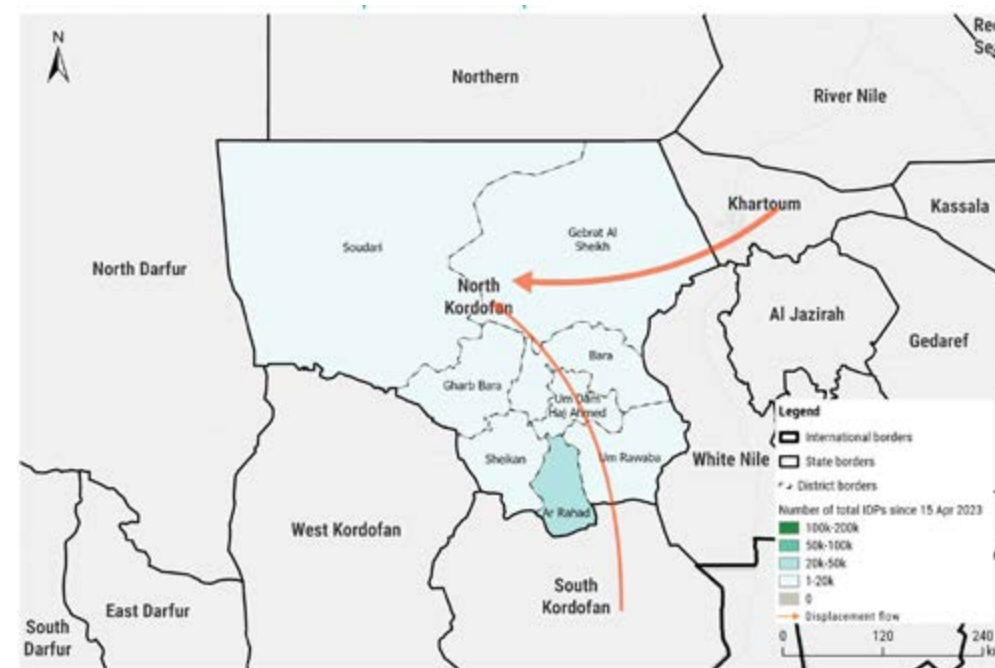


Source: ACLED (11/08/2023)

Much of the violent confrontations between the RSF and the SAF in North Kordofan have occurred in El Obeid and neighbouring localities, exposing a large number of civilians to hostilities (ACLED 11/08/2023; Dabanga 19/09/2023). The SAF's use of heavy artillery weapons and aerial strikes targeting RSF positions has resulted in casualties. Reports on casualty numbers remain limited (Sudan Tribune 20/07/2023). Armed groups have also directly targeted civilians, with increasing cases of theft and the looting of private property (ACLED 11/08/2023). The RSF has also used the Bara-Omdurman road as a smuggling route to Darfur for goods looted in Khartoum, as well as to move reinforcements from Darfur and Kordofan regions to Khartoum (ACLED 11/08/2023; Al Taghyeer 24/07/2023). This has resulted in an emergency order ceasing the transportation of essential goods lacking permits to prevent and reduce the transport of stolen goods (Dabanga 09/05/2023; ACLED 11/08/2023).

Displacement

Map 2: North Kordofan IDP displacement



Source: ACAPS using data from IOM (19/00/2023)

The conflict has triggered displacements within North Kordofan (UNICEF 25/04/2023). As at 26 September, there were 90,168 IDPs across 78 locations in the state (IOM 06/10/2023; OCHA 25/09/2023). Despite active violence in North Kordofan, the state has experienced an influx of displaced people from neighbouring states fleeing the violence in Khartoum. North Kordofan is serving as a destination or transit point for these people. As at mid-August, the majority of the IDPs in North Kordofan (84.06%) had fled the violence in Khartoum, while the remaining had been displaced from within the state (IOM 15/08/2023; Dabanga 08/06/2023). According to IOM, the majority of the people displaced in North Kordofan are seeking refuge with the host community (94%), while the rest are staying with relatives, in public facilities such as schools, in open gathering sites, or in rental spaces (IOM 06/10/2023).

Attacks on civilian infrastructure

The widespread use of heavy weaponry by the SAF and the RSF in North Kordofan has significantly damaged critical civilian infrastructure (Dabanga 10/07/2023; OCHA accessed 02/10/2023). The clashes have resulted in the closure of vital roads, such as the Omdurman-Bara and El Obeid-Kosti roads, health facilities, and financial institutions. There are also frequent blackouts and interruptions of state water connections (ACLEL 11/08/2023). Warring parties are also increasingly targeting critical infrastructure. Aerial bombardments have struck a hospital in North Kordofan, severely restricting service delivery by the health facility (STC 07/07/2023). Similarly, attacks have been reported at the El Obeid oil refinery facility, which was vandalised and looted, restricting the oil supply in the region. The conflict has also affected banks and other financial institutions. The RSF and affiliated armed groups have looted financial institutions in the area, resulting in the closure of banking infrastructure. Insecurity, criminality, and limited purchasing power have resulted in the stifling of businesses and markets (Dabanga 20/06/2023).

Protection

Protection concerns have surged in North Kordofan because of confrontations between the RSF and the SAF (OCHA accessed 02/10/2023). There have been reports indicating recurrent cases of child abduction and forceful recruitment into armed groups (UNICEF 27/04/2023; UNHCR 16/07/2023). Deaths or spontaneous displacements of family members worsen the situation, as family separations leave children without guardians or supervision (UNHCR 16/07/2023). The collapse of government structures in Sudan as a result of the clashes has limited the capacity of authorities to enforce preventative and accountability measures on protection cases. The absence of such structures has contributed to a rapid increase in protection needs.

Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence

North Kordofan has experienced a surge in sexual violence cases, especially towards girls (Dabanga 25/07/2023; OHCHR 12/09/2023). The various warring factions in the conflict have exploited the lawlessness in the region to perpetrate conflict-related sexual violence on displaced (UNHCR 15/06/2023). Women and girls disproportionately face sexual violence risks, such as rape (STC 07/07/2023; Dabanga 25/07/2023). Current security challenges in North Kordofan greatly constrain interventions for victims. Healthcare systems have also broken down as critical medical supplies run low, including post-exposure prophylaxis medication, tests, and overall treatment options for rape victims and counselling services for the populations likely to experience (GBV STC 07/07/2023; UNHCR 15/06/2023; Dabanga 25/07/2023).

Health

The violence, compounded by a doctors' strike that started on 9 August, is heavily affecting the health sector (Radio Dabanga 09/08/2023). The health situation in the state will likely further deteriorate because of the RSF siege, the imposed curfew, the continuing doctors' strike, and the violence of the conflict. The Governor has also ordered the barring of the shipment of goods, such as food and medicine, without government approval to curb smuggling, further straining the health sector (Dabanga 09/05/2023). At the same time, the interception of medicine and other essential goods by armed groups continues to challenge access to health services. There have been reports of a rising mortality rate and a lack of essential healthcare products in the state (Dabanga 08/06/2023). Recurrent power losses have limited the capacity of local hospitals to render life-saving care to critically ill and injured people (STC 07/07/2023; Dabanga 08/06/2023).

WASH

Access to clean water in North Kordofan is likely constrained. Challenges in accessing clean water persist with the breakdown of water infrastructure and services. Tap water availability depended on a stable electricity supply pumping water to the residences of community members, but electricity workers have implemented a month-long strike, challenging water supply access (Radio Dabanga 08/08/2023; MEE 30/06/2023). Residents of El Obeid have been forced to seek water from Bara and other villages outside El Obeid. Water scarcity in the town is characterised by the increased cost of water from a dug-out reservoir, which is not suitable for drinking (Radio Dabanga 08/08/2023). Besides leading to the breakdown of water infrastructure, there are reports of the RSF controlling water points, restricting further access for residents in El Obeid (MEE 30/06/2023). The population in North Kordofan also faces a high risk of waterborne and vector-borne diseases given a lack of adequate WASH infrastructure (WHO 06/12/2020). There is little information regarding the current WASH situation in North Kordofan or if water connection has been restored.

Food security

The deterioration of food security in North Kordofan is set to continue as the conflict in Sudan rages. According to IPC projections made in August, 45% of the population in North Kordofan will face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity levels between June–September 2023 (IPC 02/08/2023). Typically, the state experiences its lean season between May–September, undermining its ability to secure adequate food (FEWS NET 22/08/2023). Projections for the situation towards the end of the year into the beginning of 2024 indicate a significant improvement, with only 28% (639,316) of people in the state facing IPC 3 or

worse conditions, thanks to the yields of the harvest. That said, the impact of the conflict, such as looting, stealing, and displacement, will likely undermine the harvest, worsening food insecurity (FEWS NET 22/08/2023; IPC 02/08/2023). The current conflict has led to market disruptions and the displacement of people and resources, deepening food insecurity in the state (FAO 02/08/2023; Insecurity Insight 11/07/2023).

Education

The violence has resulted in school closures and the suspension of nationwide exams in North Kordofan, greatly affecting education access (Reuters 10/08/2023). School-aged children and teachers are among the displaced population (Dabanga 12/11/2017). The displaced are also using schools as temporary shelters. Around 4.4% of the estimated 87,600 IDPs in North Kordofan are seeking refuge and shelter in public facilities, such as schools (IOM 19/09/2023).

Humanitarian operations and access

The ensuing fragility in North Kordofan resulting from active violence, unrest, and civilian displacement has increased the humanitarian needs of the population. While aid organisations have ramped up operations in Sudan, insecurity, bureaucratic impediments, and physical access restrictions constrain humanitarian access in North Kordofan, as the state is highly militarised, with a growing presence of armed groups (OCHA 15/08/2023). As at 15 August, there had been 26 incidences constraining humanitarian operations and four recorded cases of violence against aid workers in the state (OCHA 15/08/2023; IOM 22/08/2023). On 30 May, armed groups and residents looted food supplies and vehicles from a WFP warehouse in El Obeid, disrupting the organisation's aid operations (WFP 07/06/2023). As at 15 August, there were 12 operational organisations in North Kordofan responding to the humanitarian needs of the violence-affected population, including UN agencies, INGOs, and local NGOs. There were four organisations responding to child protection programming and three from the Education Cluster (OCHA 20/09/2023). This indicates an increase in protection needs in North Kordofan.

WHICH STAKEHOLDERS OR ALLIANCES ARE AFFECTING OR DETERMINING THE SITUATION?

The Sudanese Armed Forces

The SAF is Sudan's designated military organisation and includes its air force, army, and navy components. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan is the leader and overall commanding officer of the SAF. Over 200,000 people are part of SAF personnel (CIA accessed 02/10/2023; Al Jazeera 18/05/2023). It has an advantage over the RSF since it has an air force and access to heavy weaponry, tanks, and armoured personnel carriers (Al Jazeera 18/05/2023). The SAF has many business interests, including large-scale agricultural, weapon, and ammunition production, as well as banking.

The Rapid Support Forces

The RSF is a paramilitary group under the helm of General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Al Jazeera 16/04/2023). It evolved from a majority-Arab ethnic militia prominent in the regions of Darfur and Kordofan. Previously, the RSF was the ad hoc military group under the auspices of the Government of Sudan fighting the war in Darfur. As at July 2023, the RSF had around 100,000 members (Reuters 13/07/2023).

The Kababish, Dar Hamid, and Jawma militias

The Kababish militia is an armed group predominantly comprising pastoralist camel farmers who have taken up arms to protect civilians against the RSF. On 22 July, its members clashed with the RSF near Rehid al-Nuba in North Kordofan (ACLED 11/08/2023; Dabanga 24/07/2023). Other Arab tribal militias from the Dar Hamid and Jawma communities have also joined the conflict against the RSF as they look to stave off RSF influence in the state (ACLED 11/08/2023).

PRE-CRISIS CONTEXT

Overview

North Kordofan state is situated centrally in Sudan and borders six states in the country, including Khartoum state, where the capital of the country is located, as well as North Darfur, Northern, South Kordofan, West Kordofan, and White Nile states. El Obeid is the state capital of North Kordofan, and the town is considered a major transport and logistical hub, connecting Darfur region and eastern Sudan. Because of its proximity to the conflict-prone Darfur region and South Kordofan, North Kordofan has previously faced the secondary impacts of the conflict in the two regions, driving humanitarian needs up (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023).

Population

As at 22 November 2022, the recorded population of North Kordofan was 2,777,780, 52% of whom were women and 48% men. A large portion of the population (55%) was below 19 years old, 19% of whom were of ages 0–4 (OCHA 22/11/2022).

People on the move

As at 28 February 2023, there were an estimated 9,800 refugees from neighbouring countries in North Kordofan, equivalent to 0.8% of the total estimated one million refugees in Sudan (UNHCR 15/03/2023 and 14/07/2023). The refugees were distributed across three major towns and localities in North Kordofan, namely Sheikan (7,956), Ar Rahad (1,014), and Um Rawaba (820) (UNHCR 15/03/2023; UNICEF accessed 29/08/2023). North Kordofan also hosted about 41,000 IDPs before the eruption of the conflict on 15 April, the majority of whom had been displaced from Darfur region in previous hostilities (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023).

Ethnicities

Ethnic Arabs and people from African tribes constitute the majority of inhabitants of North Kordofan. They include the Baggara, Hamid, Kababish, Majdain, Badriyah, and Hamar (UNICEF 02/10/2023). These groups are historically known to be nomadic pastoralists and camel herders in Sudan. Although the majority are Sunni Muslim adherents, minority Christian groups also exist in the state (US DOS 2022).

Baggara Arabs comprise African Arabs and indigenous communities dwelling mostly in Chad, Sudan, and West Africa. The Baggara are nomadic pastoralists who keep cattle herds, although some members have become sedentary. Baggara people speak Chadian Arabic but have incorporated a version of Sudanese Arabic into their dialect over the years because of indigenous influence (Joshua Project accessed 04/09/2023). In terms of regional conflict systems, the Baggara have participated in various conflicts in Darfur and Kordofan regions as a result of racial tensions and competition over agricultural resources. Between 1986–1989, the then-Government of Sudan armed a militia group that largely comprised Baggara Arabs to counter the Sudanese People Liberation Movement/Army (HRW 04/2004). Baggara Arabs have close links to the RSF and have previously been recruited into the RSF (Sudan Tribune 12/05/2023).

The Kababish or Dar Hamid is a camel-herding pastoralist group mainly inhabiting North Kordofan (Britannica accessed 05/09/2023). The group's main economic activity is camel, sheep, and goat herding, while a small section of the community practises crop cultivation. Some Kababish people are also traders (Joshua Project accessed 05/09/2023). Recently, in North Kordofan, a Kababish armed group clashed with the RSF in Gabret El Sheikh locality, resulting in the death of 24 Kababish militia members. The Kababish has accused the RSF of destabilising peace in the area and disrupting trade (Dabanga 24/07/2023; ACLED 11/08/2023).

Political landscape

North Kordofan is 1 of the 18 federal states of Sudan and is administrated by a governor. The larger Kordofan region was a province that in 1973 was split into two separate provinces, namely North Kordofan and South Kordofan. In 1994, Sudan's transition from provincial administration to federal states established North Kordofan as a state.

Cultural and political ties in the larger Kordofan and Darfur regions have resulted in political events affecting North Kordofan with (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023). The Government of Sudan had used a predominantly Arab ad hoc militia group as a counterinsurgency measure for much of the rebellions and insurgency in either region. This group was later reorganised into the RSF, whose members are reported to be of majority Darfurian and Kordofan origins (Al Jazeera 16/04/2023; The Guardian 24/07/2023).

Economy

North Kordofan has a diversified economy. It is a major hub for agriculture, transport, and trade. The majority of inhabitants are nomads and pastoralists who rear camels, sheep, and goats. The state also has gold mines, making gold prospecting and extraction a major economic activity (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023). Two major transnational roads serve North Kordofan, namely the Bara-Omdurman and El Obeid-Kosti roads, connecting major towns in

North Kordofan with Khartoum and beyond. These roads are strategic and crucial logistical routes, linking the western parts of the country to the eastern regions, facilitating the supply of goods and trade in the region (Beladi-FM 26/08/2022; UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023). Since North Kordofan is a livestock-producing region, the two roads serve as major export roads of the state's vast livestock resources, which are exported globally through Port Sudan on the Red Sea (Beladi-FM 03/02/2019).

Besides being an agricultural state, North Kordofan has also established a service-based economy. A network of 17 banks and banking infrastructure served this economy before the crisis, an indication of a vibrant trade hub and banking sector (UNDP 26/03/2020). Lastly, the El Obeid Refinery Company in the state capital of El Obeid marks the state as an industrialised region. The refinery plant is one of three in the country owned by the Sudanese Petroleum , refining up to 15,000 barrels of oil per day (ORC accessed 31/08/2023). The El Obeid refinery plant employs many North Kordofan residents and is an economic lifeline in the region (UNDP 26/03/2020).

PRE-CRISIS LIVING CONDITIONS

Poverty

In 2021, the poverty rate for Sudan was 55.9%, a significant increase from 36.5% in 2015. This increase was attributed to instability in the country (AfDB 2023). The combination of protracted conflict, food insecurity, and weak government systems characterised by a highly volatile political landscape drove poverty levels further upward in 2022 (WB 04/2023; AfDB 2023). As at 2016, the household poverty rate in North Kordofan was 68.8%. The poverty incidence in North Kordofan was high in the localities of Elkhawi (75%), Elnohoud (71.4%), Um Rawaba (70%), and Sheikan (65%) (Ibrahim et al. 2016). North Kordofan is an agriculture-reliant region, with a history of severe climatic disruptions, such as floods and droughts, erratic weather patterns, and major regional political uncertainties. This has contributed to a deterioration of life for the population in the state (FAO 06/2011). Besides having agricultural resources, North Kordofan has mineral resources such as gold that are extracted and exported to foreign markets. That said, gold extraction activities in the state have had little financial and economic impact on community members mining the gold (Dabanga 03/04/2017). The general decline in economic gains for residents of North Kordofan, despite the presence of businesses, and an unstable political landscape have resulted in protests and calls for better economic conditions for residents (Dabanga 03/04/2017; France 24 29/07/2019).

WASH/health

Prior to the start of the current conflict on 15 April, the WASH sector in North Kordofan was, as with the rest of the country, inadequate and limited. The state is largely arid and has limited access to groundwater. It relies predominantly on rainfall and piped municipality water for all-purpose water use (IR 24/05/2013; WHO 06/12/2020). Limited access to clean water in North Kordofan has resulted in diseases, such as cholera, diarrhoea, and typhoid. Vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, are also prevalent in the area because of frequent flooding (WHO 06/12/2020 and 06/12/2020). Gold-mining sites in the state also contaminate water sources with cyanide, an industrial chemical used during the gold extraction process that poses significant health hazards, such as respiratory complications and even death (Dabanga 03/04/2017). Prior to the eruption of the current conflict on 15 April, the use of improved drinking water was slightly higher in North Kordofan (69.8%) compared to the national average of 68%, while the improved sanitation rate in the state (25%) was significantly lower than Sudan's national average (32.9%). This indicates pre-existing WASH needs in North Kordofan prior to the conflict (CBS et al. 02/2016).

INDICATORS	NORTH KORDOFAN	NATIONAL
Use of improved drinking water sources (%)	69.8	68
Water treatment (%)	1.7	4.1
Use of improved sanitation (%)	25	32.9
A place for handwashing (%)	2.6	25.8
Availability of soap or other cleansing agent (%)	47	55

Source: CBS et al. (02/2016)

Education

As at 2018, the education sector in North Kordofan was reported to have a high access rate (93%), above the 82% national average, but the lowest retention rate of children going to school (42%), below the 62% national average (Federal Ministry of Education 02/2018). The gross enrolment rate for basic education between genders in the state as at 2018 was commendably high, with 73% for girls and 84% for boys. Attrition rates were high in secondary school at 23% for girls and 22% for boys. The low retention rates are largely attributed to high tuition fees coupled with the additional fees imposed by local authorities, pushing the cost of education unattainably high (Federal Ministry of Education 02/2018; Dabanga 12/11/2017). The rate of school dropout incidences was higher in North Kordofan compared to any other state in Sudan. School dropout was particularly prevalent for grades six through eight because

of poor school infrastructure, school closures, and the relatively high cost of education in North Kordofan (Federal Ministry of Education 02/2018; Dabanga 12/11/2017; AFDB 05/2015). Reports indicate that many of the school dropouts in North Kordofan end up working in gold mines, which offer cheap labour for wages (Dabanga 12/11/2017). This indicates that child labour and the exploitation of school-going children hamper their educational progress.

Protection

Protection concerns already existed in North Kordofan prior to the current conflict. The incidence rate of female genital mutilation in North Kordofan was 98% for girls and women ages 15–49 (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023; FGMC RI accessed 12/09/2023). Even though the practice has been outlawed in Sudan, its prevalence in North Kordofan is attributed to high poverty rates and the lack of education for the (UNICEF 17/08/2022; UNFPA 11/07/2020). Similarly, early marriage was already a major protection concern in North Kordofan before the conflict. In 2019, the prevalence rate of women marrying before the age of 15 (among women ages 15–49) in North Kordofan was 15.6%, compared to 6.9% in Khartoum state and a country average of 11.9% (OHCHR 03/01/2018). The prevalence of early marriage is attributed to poverty, conflict, and negative long-term prospects for women vulnerable to early marriage (Gindeel/Etim 09/2019).

PRE-CRISIS HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

Climate-related hazards

Over the years, North Kordofan has consistently suffered from desertification. Rainfall distribution is inconsistent and varies significantly between 100–400mm, exposing much of the state to drought cycles and the disruption of agricultural livelihood (UNICEF accessed 29/08/2023; Thomson Reuters Foundation 24/12/2016). While eastern North Kordofan is still arable, about 2km² of arable land is lost to desertification every year. This affects agricultural activities, resulting in the migration of people to other areas of the country to find jobs (TRF 23/12/2016). Besides drought, occasional flooding during the rainy season between May–October also affects North Kordofan (CBC 13/08/2022; FEWS NET 24/11/2022).

PRE-CRISIS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITY

In 2022, there were 19 organisations with operational presence in North Kordofan, which targeted 640,000 people against the 730,000 in need (OCHA 14/12/2022). 2023 projections predict highly limited educational access in North Kordofan, adding to the limited access to livelihood and recurrent food insecurity in the state (OCHA 07/11/2022). The required funding to implement the humanitarian response and programmes across the state as at 2022 was USD 58.4 million to support 44 projects (OCHA 14/12/2022).

PRE-CRISIS HUMANITARIAN ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Road conditions in North Kordofan generally allowed for easy access, but road conditions deteriorated during the July–September rainy season. In the northern regions of Al Rabaga and Abu Eroog in North Kordofan, network coverage is challenging, straining humanitarian operations in the affected area (UNICEF accessed 02/10/2023).