Understanding Sudan’s Nationwide Famine

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Cause of famines (1)

Drought and neglect of the peripheries

Examples

Darfur, Nile regions 1913-1914

Darfur and Kordofan 1984-1985
Cause of famines (2)

War, pillage, forced displacement

For example

Southern Sudan
1986-1989

Southern Sudan
1994, 1998

Darfur
2003-2005
Causes of famines (3)

Collapse of urban food entitlements

Rare examples

Khartoum 1919

Urban Sudan
Since 2017
Today:

ALL OF THE ABOVE

The Intelligence | Global news

Can the world save Sudan from a nationwide famine?
Five Pillars of Sudan’s Food Economy

1. Commercial mechanized production
2. Smallholder farming
3. Wheat imports
4. Livestock
5. Food aid

*All are damaged or destroyed in an unprecedented nationwide food crisis*
1: Commercial mechanized production

- Mostly sorghum, including for export
- Reliant on credit, fuel, fertilizer, migrant labor
- Environmentally unsustainable, economically exploitative

Credit: IFAD
2: Smallholder (village) farming

- Sorghum and millet plus livestock
- Mostly subsistence level, with families often needing to supplement with migrant labour

Credit: FAO
3: Wheat imports

- To feed the cities with their taste for bread
- An expensive addiction

Credit (above): Al Jareeda
(left) IFAD
4: Livestock

- Cattle, sheep, camels
- Vast majority owned by merchants & officers
- Exported to Egypt & Gulf
5: Food Aid

- Feeding IDP camps (many of which have been there for 20 years) and poor rural areas

Credit (above): World Vision
(Left): WFP
What this means:

Sudan exports commodities, including food, to pay for its addiction to wheat.

This system is desperately vulnerable.

But successive governments keep it going because it’s the basis for their power.
‘The Crisis Before the Crisis’

• Underlying non-sustainability of the production system

• Recurrent wars in the peripheries leading to large scale forced displacement and aid dependent populations, esp. Darfur and South Kordofan plus refugees from South Sudan

• Collapse of national economy and urban incomes from 2016 onwards
After the loss of oil revenue in 2011, Sudan tried to spend its way out of crisis ... until its economy went into free fall in 2016 ...
... causing unprecedented levels of food insecurity in Khartoum and other urban centres

Percentage of Khartoum enduring crisis levels of food insecurity (IPC data)

(note that it needs to hit 20% to figure on FEWSNET food insecurity maps)
Bread, Freedom and Change

The economic collapse and growth in urban food insecurity in 2016 directly contributed to the protests of 2018 and the overthrow of al-Bashir in 2019.

‘The Bread Loaf' by AbdulRahman Alnazeer.
Sudan’s democratic revolution foundered on the civilian-led government’s inability to solve the crisis of poverty and hunger.

International donors and creditors bear the largest responsibility for this. Especially the United States, that only lifted the ‘State Sponsor of Terrorism’ label when Sudan recognized Israel... by which time it was too late.
The five pillars today

1. Commercial mechanized agriculture
   – Under massive strain, production down 50%
2. Smallholder farming
   – Under massive strain, production down 50%
3. Wheat imports
   – Almost completely halted
4. Livestock
   – Controlled by the army and RSF
5. Food aid
   – Shut down almost wholly
# Famine Metrics

## Magnitude:
- Numbers of people affected
- Total count of excess deaths

## Intensity:
- Level of food insecurity in a specific location
- Measured according to IPC scale

## Duration:
- Length of time in crisis
- Trajectory of descent/recovery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPC phase</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th>Cereal consumption (kcal/person/day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>phase 1</td>
<td>Enough food</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(minimal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phase 2</td>
<td>Enough food, but unable to afford other expenses without resorting to coping</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(stressed)</td>
<td>mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phase 3</td>
<td>High acute malnutrition, or forced to deplete assets / resort to coping strategies</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(crisis)</td>
<td>to continue to meet food needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phase 4</td>
<td>Large food consumption gaps, very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality, or</td>
<td>800-1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(emergency)</td>
<td>extreme coping strategies to meet food needs (including asset liquidation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phase 5</td>
<td>Extreme lack of food after all coping strategies have been used. No food at all</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(catastrophe)</td>
<td>on some days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sudan Acute Food Insecurity
February 2019 assessed outcomes

5.7 million*
People in need

4.4 million
People targeted

* Based on highest sectoral figure (FSL)
Sudan Acute Food Insecurity
February 2023 assessed outcomes

KEY FIGURES

15.8M People in need of assistance in 2023
12.5M people targeted for assistance in 2023
Sudan Acute Food Insecurity
October 2023 assessed outcomes

KEY FIGURES
24.7M People in need (Revised)
18.1M People targeted (Revised)
3.7M People reached (Apr - 15 Sep)
Displacement across Sudan and into neighbouring countries since 15 April 2023

Source: DTM IOM

**Legend**

- **State capital**
- **International boundaries**
- **State boundaries**
- **Locality boundaries**
- **Undetermined boundaries**
- **Abiyel PCA area**

- **Arrivals to neighbouring countries**

- **IDPs by locality of origin**
  - 2 - 25,000
  - 25,001 - 100,000
  - 100,001 - 300,000
  - 300,001 - 600,000
  - 600,001 - 1,337,617

- **Displaced Individuals**
  - < 3,000
  - 3,001 - 12,000
  - 12,001 - 36,000
  - 36,001 - 72,000
  - 72,001 - 173,410

This map is for illustrative purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.
Sudan Acute Food Insecurity
June - September 2024 projected outcomes
The coming months will be catastrophic

The harvest in October-December may bring some respite... but won’t end the crisis

Figure 2  Share of population (month by month) by per capita cereal energy intake (scenario 2)
“Catastrophe” = famine

This implies mass mortality on a scale equal to or surpassing 1984/85

An estimated 7 million people in Sudan are likely to experience catastrophic levels of hunger by June 2024.

- 32 million in emergency
- 7 million in catastrophe
- 5 million in crisis
- 2 million food stressed
- 1 million expected to be food secure
What’s exceptional: all Sudan’s neighbours are in crisis too.
As of last month: UN annual appeal just 6% funded
Famine is a Societal Trauma

Famine is more than very many people going hungry

- It is economic devastation and mass asset transfer from the poor/vulnerable to the richer/better armed
  - Famine has its architects, its perpetrators, its beneficiaries

- It is a societal trauma, the end of a way of life, with generational consequences
  - Just as the famine of 1984/85 planted the seeds of war and atrocity 20 years later, today’s famine will have unknowable consequences
  - It took 150 years before the Irish could publicly memorialize the Great Hunger