SUDAN CRISIS

Shelter Thematic Report

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Acronyms

ACLED	The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CP	Child Protection
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FEWSNET	The Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FMoH	Federal Ministry of Health
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSC	Global Shelter Cluster
HDX	Humanitarian Data Exchange
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
MSNA	Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OTP	Outpatient Therapeutic Feeding Programs
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SAM	Severe acute malnutrition
SCI	Save the Children
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SSA	Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNW	UN Women
USAID	United States Agency for Development
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Shelter Thematic Report

Objective

The report aims to analyze the secondary impacts of shelter issues in Sudan and discuss possible solutions leveraging existing capacities. Given the large-scale displacement and pre-existing poor shelter conditions, it is critical to understand how these conditions impact populations amidst evolving conflict dynamics and how best to address them.

Contextual Background

In Sudan, humanitarian needs were at record levels even before the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023. The country has long faced challenges with internal displacement, stemming from various conflicts and environmental factors. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have consistently faced poor shelter conditions, marked by overcrowding and inferior housing quality, along with widespread issues like limited privacy, inadequate lighting, and constrained access to vital household items. Humanitarian organizations' efforts to improve these conditions have been significantly hampered by funding constraints, with the shelter cluster only 43% funded on the revised 2023 HRP (FTS 24/01/2023). Findings from the 2023 HNO identified 2.9 million people in need of shelter and NFI assistance prior to the conflict, with three in four Sudanese living in damaged shelters and many reporting severe damages that compromised the structural safety of their houses or total structural collapse. Even families with more durable housing options struggled with poor living conditions. Inflation and sharp increases in the prices of goods have also reduced families' purchasing power, limiting their ability to invest in shelter repair and maintenance. The most commonly reported shelter issues included leaks, cracked roofs, and partial roof collapses. Furthermore, findings from the 2022 MSNA showed that only a quarter of assessed households in the country had the security of tenure which protects tenants from forced eviction. For those living in camps and informal settlements, 73% of households reported having only collective types of occupancy arrangements, hence a large number of the population living in these areas were already facing HLP (Housing, Land and property) concerns in the forms of property occupation, ownership, and rental disputes (OCHA 07/11/2022, MSNA 20/09/2022). In such a scenario, the current crisis and the subsequent mass damage to civilian housing and infrastructure have heightened concerns for shelter in an already fragile environment.

The continuation and intensification of hostilities in the past eight months, from the capital to most states in Darfur to Greater Kordofan and Al Jazirah state, have caused unprecedented displacement. IOM estimates that nearly 5.8 million people have been internally displaced since April 15, 2023, making Sudan the country with the largest internally displaced population in the world (IOM 29/12/2023). In recent months, the violence has grown considerably, as reports of brutal crimes committed against different ethnic groups have become rampant, leading to further displacement in states such as Gedaref, Aj Jazirah, and South Darfur (VOA 24/09/2023, UNHCR 22/11/2023, ACLED 17/11/2023, OCHA 14/12/2023, IOM 29/12/2023)

Current Shelter Situation

The shelter crisis in Sudan has led to a near tripling of People in Need (PIN), rising to 8.6 million, while targeted assistance fell to 24%. This trend reflects an increasing disparity between growing needs and available aid.
The number of people in need of shelter assistance in Sudan has nearly tripled in the last year, escalating from 2.9 million reported in HNO 2023 to 5.7 million in its revised version in May 2023 and to more than 8.6 million as per the latest HNRP 2024, published in December 2023. However, the percentage of those targeted for assistance has decreased from 33% in May 2023 to around 24% in early 2024, indicating a widening gap between

aid capacity and the escalating crisis. The latest HNRP outlines a funding need of $212.4 million for shelter alone (OCHA 07/11/2022, OCHA 17/05/2023, OCHA 21/12/2023, OCHA FTS accessed 15/01/2023).

The ongoing conflict has caused massive displacement, with 61% of the newly displaced originating from Khartoum and seeking refuge primarily in the River Nile, White Nile, Sennar, and Aj Jazirah. Greater Darfur accounts for 32% of the newly displaced population, with the capitals of the 5 states being the hardest hit areas. These massive population movements have strained local resources, leading to a critical shortage of adequate shelter and intensifying the humanitarian crisis.

Since the outbreak of conflict on 15 April, Sudan has seen a shift in displacement patterns. Previously, displacement was largely rural, with IDPs confined to gathering sites and encampments across Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile. However, post-April 15, there's been a pivot to urban displacement, with many IDPs fleeing from major urban centers to residential areas in other cities, being sheltered by the host community, and moving away from the traditional encampment model. Notably, Eastern Sudan, once a safe haven hosting refugees in camps, now has a surge in IDPs exceeding even the numbers in historically conflict-ridden Darfur. These regions have seen an increased strain due to the influx of urban IDPs, which has taken a toll on the infrastructure and resources of these states, with already stretched and inadequate housing (OCHA 21/12/2023, OCHA 28/12/2023, OCHA 14/12/2023, UNHCR 20/09/2023).

As the majority of IDPs continue to live with the host communities, the initial solidarity is increasingly giving way to economic strains, leading to a gradual erosion of support. This shift, coupled with escalating resource scarcity and limited shelter options, is driving many IDPs toward collective sites or public buildings. A small number of IDPs are also living in improvised or severely damaged shelters.

A closer look at the displacement trends further sheds light on the vulnerability of the population groups and the shelter concerns they are facing, or most likely to encounter, in the coming months as new sites emerge to accommodate the growing number of displaced households. So far, IDPs have mostly sought refuge in areas where they had families or pre-existing communal ties in hopes of security and a greater sense of mutual support. The latest DTM shows that overall in Sudan, the majority of IDPs live with host communities (65%), followed by schools or public buildings (13%), rented accommodation (8%), camps (7%), and open areas settlements (7%), the situation differs in Central, South and North Darfur, where only 34%,39% and 44% of IDPs live with the host communities. Many reside in schools and public buildings (36% in South Darfur) and in open area informal settlements (33% in Central Darfur, 24% in North Darfur) (IOM 28/12/2023). This could be due to communal tensions in these areas. It should be noted that the recent surge of violence in these states puts the population residing in schools or open shelters at an increased risk of homelessness and physical violence. Additionally, the displaced population are very likely to live in substandard housing that lacks basic amenities. Nearly half of the IDPs interviewed throughout the country reported that electricity was not available at all. The condition is worst in most of the Darfur and Kordofan states, where 100% of the assessed IDP households cited the problem (IOM 28/12/2023).

Reports over the past three months indicate a decrease in support for IDPs residing with host communities, notably cited in an assessment conducted in Kassala and Gedaref states (OCHA 27/12/2023, NRC 22/12/2023). Under this circumstance, IDPs are forced to seek shelters elsewhere, most notably in schools or public buildings, with UNICEF reporting over 1000 schools being used as shelters for IDPs across the country (UNICEF 21/11/2023). Against this backdrop, recent schools reopening in IDP sites of Aj Jazirah state can further increase the risk of eviction (VOA 24/09/2023, UNHCR 22/11/2023, ACLED 17/11/2023, OCHA14/12/2023, IOM 02/01/2024, UNICEF 21/11/2023).

The spread of violence to the East and the resurgence of conflict in Darfur have triggered secondary displacement, causing critical shelter-access issues, with many living in damaged houses and makeshift shelters.

As the conflict rages on, many of these IDPs are at risk of secondary displacement. In December 2023, Aj Jazirah state (an IDP hub) witnessed widespread clashes between the conflicting parties, which caused further displacement of IDPs and refugees from the area. Findings from IOM's DTM show that 224,000 IDPs were subjected to secondary displacement, with an additional 275,796 IDPs newly displaced from the state (OCHA 21/12/2023, OCHA 28/12/2023, OCHA 14/12/2023, IOM 02/11/2023, UNHCR 07/11/2023, IOM 02/01/2024). Attacks in Nyala and other areas of Darfur have caused further destruction to houses and residential areas, often forcing people to sleep under trees by the roadside, causing serious concerns for their safety (Radio Tamazuj 09/11/2023). Clashes between SAF and RSF near the Hasahisa camp in Central Darfur also left thousands homeless in September 2023, causing secondary displacement and forcing people to live in makeshift shelters. Secondary displacement has now pushed people to Sennar, White Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea, River Nile, and Northern states, which not only had a significant displaced population from before but also poor shelter living conditions.

Rapid needs assessments conducted in Sennar and Gedaref states show that an estimated 73% and 63% of assessed IDPs reported not having access to shelter, respectively. Lack of financial ability and unavailability of housing were cited as the main barriers to not having shelter. In Sennar, most of the IDPs (70%) were living in makeshift shelters made mainly from tarpaulins, whilst others were staying in schools or public buildings. The situation is similar in Gedaref, with the majority of the shelters being visibly damaged (41%) and schools frequently being repurposed for housing the population (NRC 22/12/2023, NRC 20/12/2023). Regarding access to non-food items (NFIs), the RNA revealed that only 41% owned sleeping mats (NRC 22/12/2023, NRC 20/12/2023).

In Kassala state, shelters are either reported to be too small or more space is needed to accommodate all household members. An inter-sectoral need assessment conducted in the area shows that more than half of the assessed locations had insufficient shelters and beds. Many KIs also reported inadequate ventilation and a lack of gender-segregated latrines (OCHA 27/12/2023). Reports from hard-to-reach areas of West, Central, and South Darfur also indicate poor shelter conditions in the region. KIs reported that access to adequate shelter had worsened in the month before data collection, particularly because the settlement had been destroyed. In Zalingei and Nyala, shelter was one of the top priority needs reported by nearly three fourths of the assessed settlement KIs. These are areas hosting a large percentage of the non-displaced population (REACH 20/11/2023, REACH 27/12/2023, REACH 27/12/2023).

House rents have increased significantly in parts of the country, pushing many IDPs to relocate from rented accommodation to gathering sites as many are unable to afford rent.

The housing situation due to the recent crisis has also worsened due to high rental costs. Local reports indicate that the cost of renting a house is between SDG 400,000 (USD 665) and SDG 800,000 (USD 1,330) in Northern Sudan (Dabanga Sudan, 29/08/2023). Increased rents have been reported in the River Nile, Red Sea, Kassala, and El Gedaref states with local sources pointing that in some parts of Port Sudan, rents have reached SDG 1.5 million (USD 2495) and beyond. An OCHA update from August 2023 reported that displaced people are self-relocating from rented houses or relatives' houses to gathering sites due to their inability to pay rent or conflict with the families accommodating them (Dabanga Sudan 29/08/2023, Dabanga Sudan 05/01/2024, OCHA 15/08/2023). Although there is limited data to show whether there has been a change in rental prices in the country in recent months, the prices would likely increase as schools start to reopen. This could push many of those who have been living in public buildings to seek rented accommodations (IOM 29/12/2023).

In 2023, heavy rains and subsequent flooding caused widespread damage to housing and infrastructure destroying some 8,000 homes, most notably in North Darfur, Northern, and White Nile states. This is likely an undercount considering challenges around communication and information gathering.

In Sudan, the heavy rain season and floods, particularly from July to October, have severely impacted the quality and availability of shelter and accommodation. In 2023, the floods damaged infrastructure and homes, affecting an estimated 89,000 people and destroying around 8,000 homes and extensive farmland. Regions like North Darfur, Northern, and White Nile states have been heavily affected. Flooding is especially detrimental in displacement sites, where it exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. The destruction of houses forces many into overcrowded settlements or makeshift shelters which often lack basic amenities and adequate space. The overcrowding combined with the loss of houses challenges the provision of safe and stable accommodation, heightening the risk of exposure to extreme weather conditions and further displacement. Additionally, the damaged infrastructure hinders the delivery of essential services and reconstruction efforts, prolonging the shelter crisis (OCHA 21/12/2023, USAID 18/08/2023, REACH 19/09/2023).

Analysis of HLP Environment

In Sudan, long-standing conflicts over Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights' conflicts, compounded by ambiguous land rights, aggravated tribal tensions, and heightened housing challenges for the growing number of displaced individuals, especially in historically disputed areas like Darfur.

Conflicts over HLP rights play a central role in the country's conflicts. In Sudan, land disputes serve as a key catalyst for tribal tensions, a situation further exacerbated by the nomadic lifestyle of roughly 20% of the population, who are predominantly pastoralists. (UNDP 26/03/2020). These demographic factors add to the complexity of HLP issues, which extend beyond agricultural land to encompass shelter and housing rights. Diverse forms of land conflicts exist, including disputes between farmers and pastoralists, as well as disagreements among returnees, IDPs, and host communities. Conflicts also arise from the dichotomy between formal and customary land rights and between large and small landholders (UN-Habitat 30/07/2020). A 2021 study in Darfur, a region significantly impacted by these issues, showed that the vast majority of IDPs (81%) were unable to access their former lands, primarily due to illegal occupation by other tribal groups. Moreover, only 5% of IDPs held official registration for their land. With the marked increase in internal displacement in 2023, these HLP challenges have become increasingly relevant. Although the current conflict is not primarily fueled by these disputes, there is a consistent pattern of localized violent incidents that are instigated by issues related to exercising tenure rights (JIPS 22/04/2022, IOM 07/12/2023, RT 20/12/2023, Al Jazeera 24/11/2023).

The displacement crisis has intensified legal tenure insecurity among IDPs, a problem most severe in Greater Darfur. This situation undermines both the prospect of sustainable housing solutions and the effectiveness of humanitarian cash assistance. Women face additional challenges due to customary land ownership restrictions, while widespread documentation gaps and eviction threats further exacerbate the vulnerability of IDPs.

The legal insecurity in terms of tenure is particularly pronounced among the internally displaced population, and this heightened in 2023 as displacement has increased exponentially. Amid armed conflict, property, land use, and control over natural resources constitute tools of power (GSC 09/2023, UNFPA 12/10/2023, IOM 02/01/2024). According to the DTM, only 8% of the internally displaced population in Sudan lives in rented homes, and the formality of these rental agreements is unknown (IOM, 23/01/2024). The remaining 92% live in housing modalities that do not guarantee their right to housing sustainably. There is particular concern for nearly 30% of them living in high-risk conditions such as improvised shelters, schools or public buildings, camps, or open-air informal settlements. The internally displaced population in Greater Darfur is most exposed to housing modalities classified as high-risk. Over half of the more than two million IDPs spread across the five states live in these conditions of high vulnerability in terms of housing rights (IOM 28/12/2023). In Darfur, the situation is particularly severe for women, who are often excluded from land ownership rights under the region's traditional Hakura system, which prevents women and nomadic communities from owning land (JIPS 22/04/2022). This informality

and lack of legal security affects the humanitarian response as well. The HNRP 2024 indicates cash assistance as the primary approach for shelter needs among IDPs in Sudan, where informal tenure prevails. This reliance on informal housing complicates cash programs, as accurately quantifying funding needs and ensuring accountable distribution is challenging, and cash-for-rent scenarios increase the risk of commodification and exploitation (OCHA 20/12/2023).

Compounding this, assessments in other regions -like Kassala state- reveal frequent eviction threats for IDPs occupying public buildings or agricultural lands, exacerbating their insecurity. A pervasive absence of essential documentation, such as legal land ownership proof, hampers the realization and enforcement of HLP rights, while IDPs without official identity documents struggle to secure rental agreements (UNHCR 10/10/2023, OCHA 27/12/2023). The tenure risks faced by IDPs impact not only their current displacement conditions but also hinder their potential return and eventual achievement of durable solutions, as their original properties are often occupied by other communities or armed groups (RT 15/09/2023, Reuters 03/01/2024).

Targeted assaults on state buildings and disruptions in administrative and judicial services have significantly obstructed the IDPs access to mechanisms for securing their land and housing rights.
The availability of dispute resolution mechanisms, whether through customary or statutory bodies, is crucial for addressing the challenges faced, especially by Sudan's internally displaced population, in terms of HLP and tenure rights (JIPS 22/04/2022). However, especially in recent months, Sudan has witnessed a surge in attacks and occupations of key state buildings, including courthouses and government offices, along with interruptions in vital administrative services like civil registries all over the country. These services are essential, among other procedures, for the issuance of personal identification documents (Dabanga Sudan 23/05/2023, UNHCR 10/10/2023, RT 23/11/2023). According to IOM, in December 2023 only 3% of the internally displaced people could access legal or government services unimpeded, with a significant 55% unable to access any such services. This shortfall is particularly acute in conflict-heavy regions like Greater Darfur, North and West Kordofan, and Khartoum, where more than 90% of the displaced population lack access to any type of legal or governmental services, exacerbating their vulnerability in a context marked by housing and tenure insecurity (IOM 28/12/2023).

Secondary Impacts of Shelter Issues

Physical and Mental Well-Being

Inadequate and overcrowded shelters, compounded by the rainy season, increase the risk of water- and vector-borne disease outbreaks and spread, such as the current surge in cholera cases.
Inadequate shelter can lead to both physical and mental health risks. In terms of physical health risks, WHO notes that inadequate and overcrowded shelters are essential factors in the transmission of diseases with epidemic potential, such as cholera, malaria, and acute watery diarrhea. Disease outbreaks tend to be more prevalent and severe in areas with high population density and significantly deteriorated hygiene conditions. In addition, insufficient shelters expose people to extreme weather events such as heavy rain, floods, extreme temperatures, etc. (CARE 08/2020, WHO 09/01/2024).

The outbreak of the conflict in April 2023, followed by extensive displacement, has further deteriorated Sudan's already strained housing situation. With limited options, IDPs primarily relied on host communities or improvized shelters -such as schools and other public buildings- where spaces are not equipped for long-term habitation and often lack basic residential facilities and essential services. The situation is further exacerbated by a declining health system, poor sanitation, and a lack of access to clean water (OCHA 19/10/2023). On top of the conflict, the June-September heavy rainy season and floods led to the destruction of infrastructure, homes, and crops affecting around 90,000 people in the country. This increased the risk of water and vector-borne diseases as stagnant pools of water and flooded areas became breeding grounds for cholera, malaria and Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers (VHF) (OCHA 05/11/2023, OCHA 15/08/2023, OCHA 21/12/2023, REACH 19/09/2023, USAID 18/08/2023).

Beyond South and North Darfur, other localities heavily impacted by the flood included Meroe in Northern state, Ad Damar in River Nile state ([OCHA](#) 05/11/2023), as well as Kosti in White Nile state, which faced an outbreak of malaria and watery diarrhea due to deteriorating sanitary conditions ([Radio Dabanga](#) 22/08/2023). In these areas, shelter needs rapidly spiked as did risks of diseases' outbreaks. Overall, about 697,000 malaria cases and eight associated deaths were identified, mainly in White Nile, Aj Jazirah, and Gedaref. Over 4,000 measles cases were reported between 15 April and 15 September 2023, mostly from White Nile and Aj Jazirah.

In late September 2023, Sudan declared a cholera outbreak in Gedaref. Since then, the number of suspected cholera cases continued to increase and as of 26 December 2023, at least 8,536 suspected cases of cholera, including 231 associated deaths have been reported from 46 localities of nine states: Aj Jazirah, Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Khartoum, Red Sea, Sennar, South Kordofan, and White Nile states. So far**, Red Sea State, Gedaref State,** and **Aj Jazirah** are the states with the highest number of reported cases ([UNICEF](#) 20/10/2023, [OCHA](#) 31/12/2023, [OCHA](#) 04/01/2023). These numbers are most likely higher as Sudan's national-level epidemiological data is lacking due to the damage to the Sudanese health system and lack of medical personnel caused by the ongoing conflict.

The inadequate living conditions faced by IDPs, including lack of shelter, overcrowding, insecurity, unhealthy environments, and uncertain housing tenure, significantly detriment their psychological well-being.
Even before the conflict began in 2023, mental health and psychosocial support were already limited in Sudan. A 2021 WHO report emphasized the scarcity of resources for mental health, indicating an apparent absence of psychiatric nurses, a shortage of clinical psychologists, and only two certified child psychiatrists available in the country ([WHO](#) 17/12/2021). Furthermore, mental health services provided by the Health Cluster covered only twelve out of the eighteen states before the outbreak of the conflict ([Health Cluster and WHO](#) 07/02/2023). The situation has become more severe after the conflict, with mental health and psychosocial support services being almost nonexistent, especially in the affected states. According to the Health Cluster, mental health services are available in only seven out of the eighteen states all of which are located in the non-conflicted areas([UNHCR](#) 08/08/2023, [Health Cluster and WHO](#) 16/01/2024). WHO associates displacement and emergencies with significant psychological stress that can trigger the breakdown of traditional community and family structures, which are essential contributors to positive well-being. Post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, experiencing social challenges, or developing negative coping strategies are some of the mental health conditions that displaced people may suffer from. According to WHO, the prevalence of depression and anxiety rises with age, and women are more prone to experience depression than men. Moreover, people with severe mental disorder histories are especially vulnerable during and after emergencies ([WHO 16/03/2022](#)). Children in conflict zones who have lost their homes and have been displaced from their neighborhood, are vulnerable to increased risk of depression and anxiety ([Save The Children](#) 30/01/2023). According to the report from the Shelter and Health Multi-sectoral Learning Day, proper living conditions are an essential factor in the mental recovery of affected people in times of crisis. It was noted that overcrowding, unhealthy living conditions, and lack of tenure security can all contribute to stress and associated mental health issues. Adequate shelter, together with other factors, may mitigate or reduce the impact of these issues ([CARE 08/2020](#)).

While WHO and the Health Cluster provide some information regarding mental health and psychosocial services, including the number of consultations, geographical distribution, and the number of consultations over time, mental health services are available in only 15 out of 189 localities and in 7 out of 18 states across Sudan. This presents an incomplete picture of the actual situation in the country ([WHO and Health Cluster](#) 06/12/2023). Specific information on the effect of the current shelter situation on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of IDPs is lacking.

Social Cohesion

The conflict has reignited communal tensions in Sudan, and recent reports of ethnic violence in Darfur states have heightened concerns about civilian safety in the country, especially in camps and informal settlements. There have also been accounts of large-scale violence against civilians in Ag Geinena, including the killing and torture of non-Arab civilians. In West Darfur, RSF's repeated attacks on the Masalit tribe have killed thousands of people including 700-800 IDPs who were residing in the Adramata camp. There have also been witness reports of destruction and looting of houses occupied by the Masalit population and many amongst the tribe are violated, abused, sold into slavery, and killed. This has created an unsafe environment for the population living in West Darfur, especially IDPs who live in open shelters, and camps as they are more vulnerable to attacks (IOM 09/11/2023, BBC 08/11/2023, UN 16/11/2023, CNN 08/11/2023, Al Jazeera 08/11/2023, ECHO 06/11/2023). Camps have largely become unsafe as RSF continues to disregard the civilian nature of these settlements (IOM 20/11/2023, OCHA 02/11/2023, IOM 15/11/2023, ACLED 03/11/2023).

Nine months into the conflict, competition over limited resources has increased tensions between host communities and IDPs, particularly in Kassala, Gedaref, and Darfur states. IDPs there are often forced to relocate to gathering sites or open shelters where conditions are extremely poor, putting them at a high risk of violence.

The lack of resources, limited infrastructure, and continuous violence have strained the relationship between IDPs and their host communities in many parts of the country. Findings from a need assessment in Kassala state show that 45% of internally displaced households require urgent relocation from Almasna due to tension with host communities. Similar issues were reported in the Al Fao locality of Gedaref state, where in a study, 26% of the respondents indicated that they had faced tensions from the host communities, with the major causes being an added economic burden on the host community due to increased demand for services for the IDPs. In a Search for Common Ground (SFCG) report, Gedaref was found to be a state where the highest proportion of IDPs reported facing inhumane treatment in accommodation centers by local authorities and communities. Reasons behind this growing mistrust and social divisions are noted to be competition over limited resources such as water, food, and housing, as well as perceptions that IDPs receive preferential treatment or resources from humanitarian actors. These issues can likely push IDPs to move to gathering sites or to open shelters if hostilities grow. This is corroborated by the findings from the recent DTM which found that amongst the IDPs who intend to move to another location, many wanted to do so due to social or community reasons (IOM, 29/12/2023). In fact, amongst the 3,376 IDP households assessed in East Darfur who intended to move elsewhere, nearly half of them (49%) wanted to do so because of the aforementioned reasons. This was true for 13% of assessed households in Central Darfur who had similar intentions (OCHA 27/12/2023, NRC 22/12/2023 IOM, 29/12/2023, SFCG 19/12/2023))

Protection

The escalation of conflict in Sudan since April 2023 has intensified shelter-related protection risks. The non-displaced population faces at-home risks, while IDPs face increased vulnerabilities in overcrowded shelters, heightening exposure to violence and exploitation.

Since April 2023, millions of Sudanese have been forced to abandon their homes in search of security. However, despite challenging circumstances, some people in conflict-affected areas continued to live in their homes. The conflict has rendered it nearly impossible for the majority of Sudan's population to fulfill basic needs. Consequently, these people not only face the constant risk of physical injury and death but also risk compromising their wellbeing as they resort to harmful coping mechanisms. These include the sale of assets and properties, child labor, involvement in the exchange of sex, and other forms of exploitative labor. Additionally, forced recruitment and the recruitment of children pose significant risks in conflict areas. (UNHCR 04/06/2023, UN HRC 16/10/2023, Washington Post 30/11/2023, The World Bank 13/08/2018).

While people remaining in their places of origin experience risks mainly associated with the context of violence and instability, the internally displaced population are exposed to additional and critical protection risks such as risks of aggression, smuggling, human trafficking, and GBV. Most of these risks originate from or are aggravated by the temporary or definitive loss of shelter. The extent and nature of risks for IDPs vary depending on both the type of shelter—such as camps, host communities, rented accommodation, improvised shelters, schools, public buildings, and open area informal settlements—and the specific demographic of the IDPs themselves. Particularly vulnerable groups include single women or female-headed households, unaccompanied children or child-headed households, people with disabilities, and the elderly (NRC 07/12/2023). Overcrowding and improvised shelters and settlements are aggravating factors in terms of protection risks for the most vulnerable groups living in these spaces. In addition to the competition over scarce services and goods, the absence of safe and private personal spaces leads to an exponential increase in protection risks , usually violence (IOM 04/01/2024).

In hard-to-reach settlements across **Central Darfur, East Darfur, South Darfur,** and **West Darfur**, more than 85% of the Key Informants (KIs) reported a pervasive sense of insecurity (REACH 23/11/2023, REACH 27/12/2023, REACH 27/12/2023, REACH 27/09/2023). In Kassala, IDPs living in gathering sites such as school buildings fear being evicted. Some gathering sites lack doors and windows, resulting in IDPs having no privacy (OCHA 27/12/2023). In Al Fao locality in Gedaref state, 60% of the interviewed IDPs reported a lack of access to shelter, almost half of shelters being damaged, and overcrowded gathering sites. Furthermore, nearly half of the assessed IDPs reported that there is no safe place in the community, and a quarter said that there is a risk of attack outside of the community (NRC 22/12/2023). In **Sennar state**, 73% of the respondents indicated that they do not have access to shelter (NRC 20/12/2023)

Vulnerable people such as women, children, disabled people, and people with special needs are more prone to protection risk due to lack or inadequate shelter.
Inadequate and unsafe shelter conditions have led to an increase in family separations among IDPs, particularly affecting children. In Gedaref State, for example, more than half of the respondents noted instances where children have been separated from their usual caregivers. Separated children are at increased risk of forced recruitment or exploitation. Prior to the conflict, it was estimated that three to five percent of IDP children in Sudan were unaccompanied. However, due to the ongoing conflict, which has resulted in involuntary family separation and the loss of family members, these numbers are assumed to be much higher. (UNHCR 16/07/2023, NRC 22/12/2023).

Women and adolescent girls are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, amongst other protection threats, due to lack of shelter or inadequate shelter - such as shelter with no separated spaces for men and women. The GBV sub-sector in Sudan has reported a significant increase in the number of individuals requiring GBV services, rising from 3.1 million (pre-crisis) to 4.2 million. since April 15, 2023 The actual figures are likely higher, considering unreported cases in inaccessible areas. Most incidents occurred as women were fleeing, while others took place in homes during armed attacks (UN Women 24/09/2023).

Information gathered from host communities in **White Nile** and **Red Sea** highlights that the majority of IDPs, especially women and children, are residing in insecure receiving areas such as schools and urban centers. These public locations expose them to elevated risk of sexual violence and harassment compared to those hosted in people's homes (UN Women 24/09/2023). In Port Sudan, **Red Sea state**, KIs reported that displaced families from Khartoum prioritized the safety, security, and privacy of women and girls when accessing shelter. These families chose to spend additional resources on renting separate housing in secure locations for women members of their households (UN Women 24/09/2023). Simultaneously, men remained in public schools, clubs, and camps. This approach was further confirmed by IFRC's emergency appeal, highlighting that families prioritized the safe evacuation of women and children to reduce their exposure to sexual and gender based violence. This increased risk is reported by women-led organizations in Sudan (UN Women 24/09/2023).

In both **Gedaref** and **Sennar states**, respondents highlight that women and girls lack safe haven within the community, facing the risk of attacks when traveling outside the community or going to the market and latrines. Furthermore, in **Gedaref State**, 8% reported incidents of sexual violence against women and girls within their homes (NRC 20/12/2023, NRC 22/12/2023). Moreover, In **Gedaref, Sennar** and **Kassala states**, information indicates that some facilities lack separate gendered facilities and latrines. (NRC 20/12/2023, NRC 22/12/2023, OCHA 27/12/2023). In IDP camps in **South Darfur**, many women and children endure physical violence and abuse, including rape, killings, injuries, and various forms of social harassments (Network on Humanitarian Action 14/09/2023). Women and girls who sought refuge in **Kassala state** have reported harassment from SAF and RSF at checkpoints. Additionally, incidents of GBV were observed.

Education

The conflict persists unabated and expanded to new areas, increasing the need for shelters and putting more strain on school infrastructures, further limiting learning spaces.

Sudan has been witnessing a shortage of basic school infrastructure, notably classrooms, even before the the conflict in April 2023. According to UNICEF, only 60% of the available classrooms in government schools are permanent, with an average classroom-pupil ratio of 1:62. This resulted in overcrowded classrooms, open-air classes under trees or children learning in unsafe and temporary classrooms (UNICEF March 2019). Moreover, in most of the IDP camps hosting displaced individuals, there is a lack of teachers and necessary learning facilities to offer education for displaced children (JRS 05/07/2023; ECW 20/06/2023).

The ongoing conflict has led to the closure of schools and the repurposing of over 1,000 schools as shelters, severely restricting educational access and impacting over 6.5 million children. (Education Cluster 10/11/2023).

The ongoing conflict between RSF and SAF and their affiliate militia groups has destroyed shelter and infrastructure, leading to increased displacements, and prompting many IDPs to seek shelter in schools. Schools have been used as gathering sites in many states as they provide a better shelter option when compared to tents or open spaces.

The arrival of the displaced people in new areas, particularly those in neighboring states with less conflict, and the subsequent occupation of more schools are among other factors that further limit the availability of spaces for children to continue their education (UNHCR 10/10/2023). This situation also heightens concerns that many children will have no access to schools in the new academic year, exposing children to increased risk of a myriad of child protection issues including child labor, child marriage and abuse (Reuters 10/08/2023). According to OCHA, over 5 million children residing in areas less affected by the conflict are awaiting confirmation from local authorities regarding the reopening of classrooms (OCHA 15/01/2024).
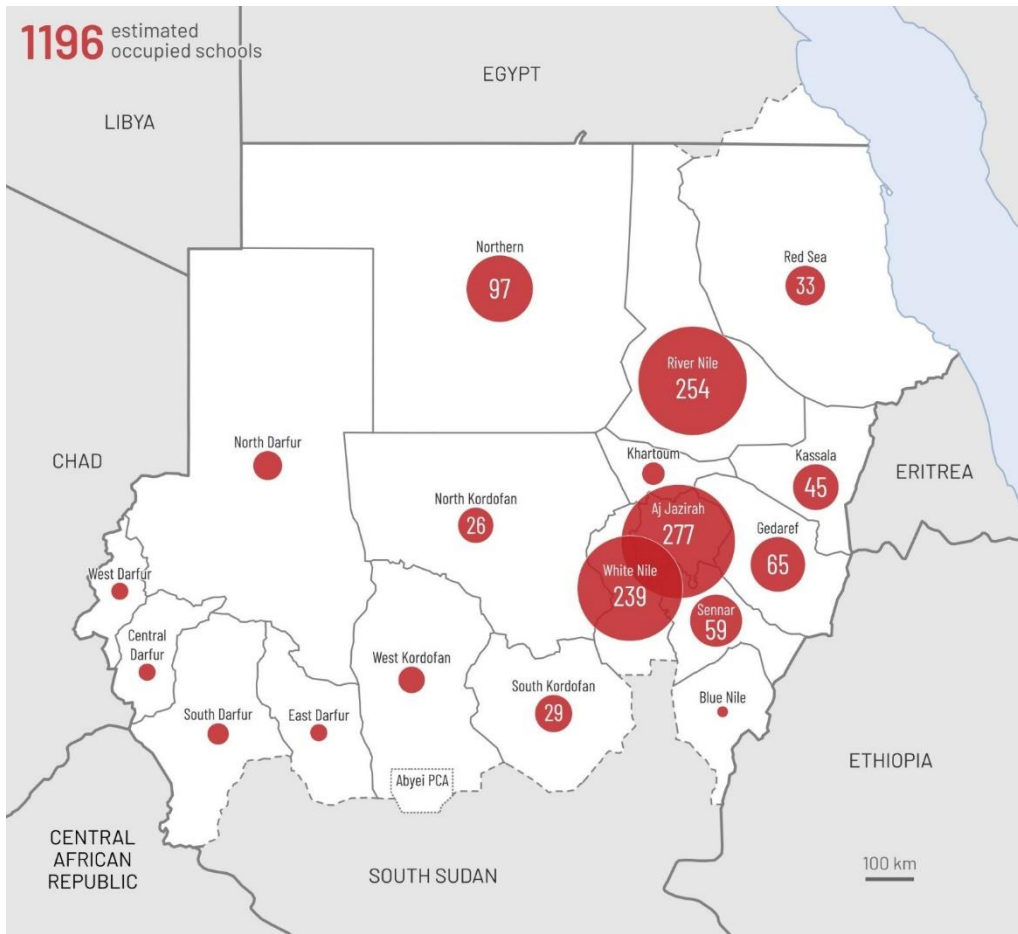
Figure 1: Estimated number of occupied schools. Source: IOM DTM Sudan Weekly Displacement Snapshot 17, 21 Jan 2024.

The absence of adequate shelter and associated displacement leads to the relocation of both students and teachers away from educational facilities, thereby reducing overall access to schools.
As individuals continuously seek secure and stable housing, they frequently relocate away from educational zones, consequently limiting children's proximity to schools and educational resources. Likewise, teachers find themselves compelled to shift from one place to another in pursuit of improved shelter amenities. This creates a massive gap in terms of human resources in the education sector. The distance from schools coupled with absence of educators and destroyed or damaged school infrastructure contribute to lack of access to education in most parts of the country (OCHA 30/10/2023).

At least 54% (10,400) of schools in conflict-affected areas had been shut down before the end of the last academic year (OCHA 19/10/2023). Despite concerted local efforts to resume school operations nationwide in November, numerous obstacles impeded the reopening process. These challenges included issues such as delayed payment to teachers, a shortage of teachers, anticipated overcrowding resulting from displacements, and a multitude of classrooms/schools requiring repairs due to conflict-related damage and prolonged use as shelters (UNICEF 21/11/2023). It is uncertain that areas affected less by the conflict can resume education (OCHA accessed 05/11/2023; Education Cluster 23/10/2023).

The lack of access to education will likely have longer-term effects, impeding children from achieving their full academic potential (UNICEF 20/10/2023; OCHA 19/10/2023). This will further increases the protection risks for

children, exposing them to the risk of early marriage, child labor, trafficking, forced recruitment, and GBV, including female genital mutilation (Education Cluster 23/10/2023).

Possible steps forward

In light of the complex issues stemming from internal displacement in Sudan, precipitated by the ongoing conflict, a set of strategic steps can be taken by humanitarian actors, donors and the government to tackle the shelter-related challenges. The following suggestions, derived from discussions with shelter partners and secondary research, outline actionable steps toward fostering sustainable solutions and addressing the shelter needs of displaced populations.

- **Prioritization of cash assistance can facilitate the improvement and expansion of existing housing structures in communities sheltering IDPs. This approach encourages these communities to provide long-term accommodation for IDPs, fostering a more sustainable and supportive environment**. By concentrating on enhancing existing infrastructure, substantial and better-quality shelter can be provided for both IDPs and their host families. Direct financial support to host families to improve roofs, rooms, and windows, will help ensure a more stable living condition for all.

- **Provision on rent money to the most vulnerable groups who often face severe resource limitations, like pregnant women and people with disabilities.** This approach can address the unique and additional challenges that individuals encounter due to their specific vulnerabilities.

- **Authorities and landlords can work together in creating long-term rent control agreements.** High rental costs force IDPs to seek alternative accommodations like camps and public spaces. By introducing a rent control and monitoring system, housing would be more affordable. Regular review and adjustments in the strategy can contribute to creating a stable housing environment for displaced individuals in the long run.

- **Existing public infrastructures must be improved. Investment in infrastructure development is crucial, including improvements in water supply, sanitation, healthcare, and education in areas where IDPs have settled**. Collaboration between local and international entities is essential to support the growing population in hosting areas, especially considering that such investments may exceed Sudan's fundraising capacity (UNHCR 30/01/2023).

- **Increase the capacity of shelter facilities by enhancing existing school infrastructure, including expanding the buildings and providing additional furniture, to accommodate a greater number of students in a single school.**. Simultaneously, alternative public spaces that can be repurposed for educational use can be explored (ISCG 24/09/2023).

- **Fostering peaceful coexistence and social cohesion between IDP and host communities is important.** A comprehensive strategy would involve the implementation of community-based conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. This would include training local leaders and promoting dialogue among different groups (OHCHR 15/06/2023).

- **To ensure equal access to assistance, adopt a community-based and conflict-sensitive approach when aiding both IDPs and host communities.** This can enable IDPs and host communities to be involved in the planning, execution and monitoring of assistance (UNDP 06/2020).

- **The long-term strategy should also include fostering employment opportunities through job creation programs and vocational training initiatives**. By empowering both displaced populations and host

communities economically, this approach can contribute to stability and diminish potential tensions arising from competition over limited resources.

- **Transition from recurring short-term emergency responses to sustainable development approaches**. Investments must be directed towards establishing more permanent housing, improving public facilities, and implementing disaster risk reduction measures. This approach will enhance resilience and build capacities to absorb cyclical shocks effectively (UNHCR 30/01/2023).

- **Explore opportunities for humanitarian and development nexus programming by utilizing multi-year flexible funding. This approach allows a sustainable response that can adapt to the evolving context and emerging crises**. Collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including various government levels, private sector, humanitarian, development, peace actors, and affected populations, can establish a robust evidence base for planning durable solutions and designing response programs (Deliver Aid Better 27/04/2023).

Conclusion

The shelter crisis in Sudan is alarming, with millions of people facing dire living conditions amid internal displacement and a shortage of resources necessary for targeted assistance. Factors like increased house rents, heavy rains, and flooding, which caused widespread damage to housing and infrastructure, compounded the crisis. Additionally, long-standing conflicts over Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights, coupled with the disruption of administrative services, have intensified tenure insecurity, hindering displaced populations' ability to secure their right to land and housing.

The secondary effects of the shelter crisis have far-reaching consequences, affecting both the physical and mental well-being of the population. Inadequate and overcrowded shelters contribute to the spread of diseases, with cholera outbreaks reported. Mental health services, already scarce before the conflict, have now become nearly nonexistent, with poor living conditions posing significant risks to the displaced population's psychological well-being and hindering their journey towards self-reliance. The persistent use of educational facilities as shelters has continued unabated with the increasing number of displacements, further restricting access to education. Even if the relevant systems and authorities strengthen their support for education, this negatively affects both displaced people and host communities.

A lack of a holistic approach to addressing shelter issues will worsen the humanitarian situation, adversely affecting both human lives and infrastructure. The recent secondary displacement in November and December 2023 from the states of Aj Jazirah to Sennar, White Nile, Gedaref, and Kassala regions has brought to light significant challenges in obtaining adequate shelters. The majority of displaced individuals continue to live within the host community, placing immense pressure on hosting households, many of whom struggle to secure livelihoods to support the increased responsibilities. As aid and resources diminish due to the rising number of displaced persons in these areas, tensions escalate between IDPs and their host communities. This tension has the potential to strain the peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities.

Urgent and comprehensive efforts are needed to provide targeted assistance, tackle the underlying reasons of displacement, and ensure the well-being of the affected population. It is vital to initiate a thorough examination of the importance of shelter concerns right from the beginning of the response and to grasp the profound social, communal, and historical intricacies within Sudan This can help in mitigating potential risks and negative consequences on other sectors as well. The international community must step up its support to alleviate the suffering of the people in Sudan and work towards sustainable solutions to the shelter crisis.

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