Insights on Food Security in Sudan

February 2024





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Current Situation

Urban areas face impacts from looting, infrastructure damage, and disrupted services, while rural regions suffer hunger due to planting challenges, trade disruptions, and an influx of IDPs, stressing food access even in non-conflict zones.

The extensive looting of assets and food stocks, widespread damage of critical infrastructure, disruption of trade flows, markets, and basic services are impacting urban populations where fighting is most often centered. People in urban areas depend on food supplies from rural areas, which are not in a position to meet the demand. In rural locations, people are suffering from worsening hunger, driven by the high cost and shortages of production inputs during the planting season, disruptions in trade and a significant influx of IDPs. The combined impact is stressing access to food even in locations that have not seen significant fighting.

In urban localities, over half of the population is acutely food insecure (Phase 3 and above), with 17% in Emergency (Phase 4) of food insecurity. Meanwhile, 79% of rural localities are in crisis levels, out of which 9% are in emergency levels of food insecurity. Distribution of aid to hard-to-reach areas of Aj Jazirah, Khartoum, Greater Darfur and Greater Kordofan remains extremely challenging and inconsistent. This has the most significant impact on localities where populations are primarily settled in camps, with 42% in emergency levels of food insecurity and the remaining 58% facing crisis conditions (FEWSNET 12/2023, IOM 02/06/2023, IPCInfo 12/12/2023).

Displaced populations are seeking shelter in urban areas of Khartoum and Aj Jazirah, areas that are projected to face Emergency levels of food insecurity. Conflict-related insecurity and the siege of towns and neighborhoods by armed actors is impacting the harvest and the ability of farmers, traders, and aid actors to deliver to these urban locations (France 24 01/09/2024, Karrari RC 07/01/2024).

The expansion of the conflict to Aj Jazirah in December 2023, a key agricultural state and a hub for humanitarian aid, represents a dangerous evolution particularly as it has occurred during the winter planting season and the Millet/Sorghum Harvest (OCHA 15/12/2023, FEWSNET 12/2023). This will negatively impact food production and trade in both states and further limit the delivery of aid, driving a

significant deterioration in food security particularly in urban areas dependent on food production and delivery from productive rural locations that are expecting below-average harvests (FEWSNET 12/2023, IOM 02/06/2023, IPCInfo 12/12/2023).

The majority of IDP households across Sudan, comprising 63% in urban areas and 73% in rural areas, are living with host families or communities (IOM 21/01/2024). This suggests that host families might be experiencing food shortages due to the need to share resources with IDP families who have taken refuge.

In urban areas, schools and public buildings constitute the second-largest shelter option for IDPs, accounting for 17% of IDP households. This is specifically profound in the rural areas of Greater Darfur where around 26% of IDP households have settled in schools or public buildings (IOM 21/01/2024). NRC notes that insufficient space in public buildings and spaces has led many local and state authorities to relocate displaced individuals to less congested areas. This has resulted in IDPs being placed in more remote locations, away from essential services including markets (NRC 12/2023). In contrast, in rural areas, informal settlements represent the second-largest option for IDP households, comprising 12%. This number is specifically higher for those living in rural areas of Greater Darfur where 44% of IDP households live in informal settlements. (<u>IOM</u> 21/01/2024). Living conditions in majority of the informal settlement sites are below minimum standard, and access to food has been identified as one of the top needs in these sites (HNRP 12/2023). Only 10% of IDP households in urban areas and 3% of IDP households in rural areas live in rented accommodation (<u>IOM</u> 21/01/2024).

Food insecurity in Greater Darfur mirrors national trends but with significantly worse outcomes, with FEWSNET expecting populations in heavily conflict-affected urban areas to be in emergency phases.

In Greater Darfur, 25% of urban localities and 20% of rural localities are in emergency levels of food insecurity with the remainder in crisis levels (IPCInfo 12/12/2023).

In North and East Darfur, the greatest increases in the number of people in crisis or worse conditions are those living in camps or urban settlements, reflecting the growing pull factor of those urban settlements as populations seek safety from the conflict. The insecurity is also disrupting trade that is the lifeline of urban settlements and the large camps surrounding them, further exacerbating the food insecurity for the growing populations there.

In Central, West and South Darfur, the displacement of populations towards rural areas drives growing needs for food that is challenged by expectations of below average harvests. Disrupted trade also limits access to food in urban settlements (FEWSNET 12/2023, IOM 29/12/2023, IOM 02/06/2023).

This leaves 5,290,511 people in crisis levels of food insecurity or worse (Phase 3+) which corresponds to 46% of the population of the region. West Darfur remains the most concerning, with 60% of the population being at least in Crisis conditions, while half of urban localities and 60% of rural localities are in Emergency conditions (FEWSNET 12/2023, IPCInfo 12/12/2023, IOM 02/06/2023).

In North and South Kordofan emergency levels of food insecurity are playing out in urban settlements that are hosting the majority of IDPs. In West Kordofan, the IPC caseload is spread between urban and rural settlements with IDPs moving to different loca-

tions based on where they perceive safety as well as tribal ties.

In Greater Kordofan, 33% of urban localities and 13% of rural localities are in emergency levels of food insecurity with the remainder suffering under crisis outcomes (IOM 02/06/2023, IPCInfo 12/12/2023). With 93% of IDPs in Greater Kordofan sheltering within the host community and 63% in urban settlements, there is a growing demand for food in urban areas. This is coupled with reduced populations in rural producing areas and difficult market access due to the growing insecurity (IOM 29/12/2023). This is particularly pronounced in Shiekan locality of North Kordofan that houses the besieged state capital of El Obeid, and in urban localities across the western end of South Kordofan (FEWSNET 12/2023, IPCInfo 12/12/2023).

In West Kordofan where the IDP caseload is spread across both urban and rural settlements the food security caseload is equally spread. The most impacted localities are those that suffered conflict during critical planting and harvest seasons due to the presence of oil and gas infrastructure or the incursion of armed groups from neighboring states (Radio Dabanga 14/12/2023, Radio Dabanga 28/12/2023, IOM 02/06/2023).

Driving Factors

The devastating conflict, along with organized violence and the ongoing economic downturn, has forced approximately 37% of the population into severe levels of acute food insecurity (OCHA 21/01/2024). The situation has been further exacerbated by factors like supply chain restriction, lack of humanitarian access, funding constraints, and the effect of the conflict on agricultural production.

Destruction of Establishments: The ongoing conflict and the increasing levels of violence are exacerbating the humanitarian emergency, further deteriorating the food security situation for people living in urban, semi-urban, and rural locations. Looting of markets, banks, industries, and public buildings has resulted in an increased shortage of food across the country (FAO 12/12/2023) as many people neither have access to food nor have the economic means to obtain it.

Prices have generally general increased in most markets throughout December 2023 (FEWS NET

06/01/2024), making it more difficult for people to afford basic food items. More on price trend will be discussed in the Price Trend section below.

Economic Decline: Throughout December 2023, Sudan's economic condition further worsened due to the substantial disruption of economic activities caused by the ongoing conflict between SAF and RSF, coupled with consistently low foreign currency reserves, elevated inflation rates, and continuous depreciation of the local currency. The situation has been intensified by significant declines in export revenue, and the government's ability to stimulate the economy amid ongoing conflict has been restricted. The Sudanese pound (SDG) has continued to devalue more rapidly against the United States Dollar (USD) on the parallel market (FEWS NET 06/01/2024). Unemployment has surged, affecting over half of the over the population. The deteriorating economic conditions have resulted in elevated food prices and low purchasing power, rendering both displaced individuals and non-displaced host communities more vulnerable. Many are considering moving to other states in search of employment opportunities (<u>IOM</u> 02/11/2023).

Supply chain disruptions: The escalation of the conflict, especially the capture of Wad Madani - a crucial trade hub-following the decline of Omdurman market in Khartoum, has significantly hindered trade flow and market operations. The primary western route connecting Madani to Kosti, El Obeid, and El Fasher, crucial for transporting goods and humanitarian aid to Greater Darfur and Greater Kordofan, has faced increased disruption. Similarly, routes in the east, from Port Sudan to Gedaref and Sennar, have experienced growing disruptions following attacks on Al Jazirah (FEWSNET 12/2023)

El Obeid in North Kordofan remains a contested site between RSF and SAF, impacting supply and prices in markets across central, eastern, and western Sudan. The RSF takeover of Um Keddada further affects El Fasher and Nyala markets, as it grants control over almost all entrances to El Fasher. The persistent security issues in Greater Kordofan and Greater Darfur significantly constrain market trade flows, particularly affecting heavily impacted markets like El Geneina in West Darfur and Zalengei in Central Darfur (FEWSNET 12/2023)

Trade flows and market operations are anticipated to face substantial disruptions nationwide, adversely affecting the availability and prices of both locally produced and imported essential commodities (FEWSNET 12/2023)

Hindrance to aid: Continuous hindrance to humanitarian activities due to looting of humanitarian facilities and aid has contributed to increased food insecurity. Aid activities have been further exacerbated by restricted trade, decreased supplies, poor network and phone connectivity, and bureaucratic impediments including delays and denials of visas and

travel permissions – have disrupted outside aid. The closures of banks have additionally restricted the availability of cash for operations and hindered the efforts of humanitarian actors in delivering services (IOM 05/12/2023).

After the attacks in Ai Jazirah in December 2023 and the theft of 2,500 metric tons of aid from a WFP storage facility in Wad Madani, aid distribution in the state has been halted (FEWS NET 06/01/2024). Individuals in conflict-prone areas, such as Khartoum, Darfur, Kordofan, and now Ai Jazirah, are unable to receive assistance unless humanitarian convoys are permitted to cross the frontlines. However, increasing challenges, including security threats, roadblocks, and requests for fees and taxes, are making it nearly impossible for aid agencies to navigate these obstacles (WFP 02/02/2024). Currently, WFP can only provide regular food assistance to one out of every ten individuals experiencing emergency levels of hunger (IPC phase 4) in Sudan (WFP 02/02/2024).

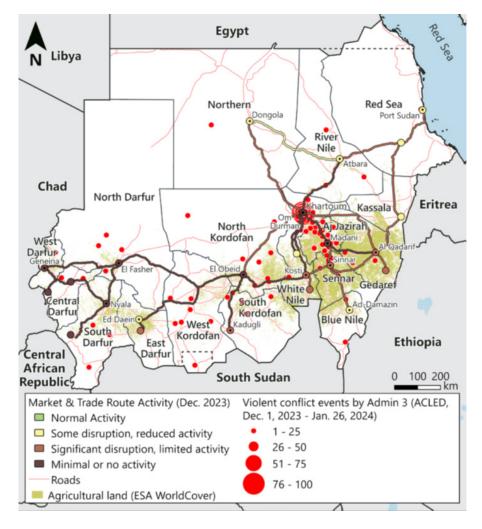


Fig: Markets and trade route activity map, cropland, and violent events, December-January 2024 (Source: <u>FEWSNET</u> 01/02/2024)

Impact of conflict on agriculture: The disruption of agricultural activities, encompassing planting and harvesting, coupled with constrained access to essential resources like fertilizers and seeds, has created an imminent food security crisis. The repercussions of these disturbances are increasingly apparent, marked by substantial declines in crop yields and a shortage of crucial food supplies throughout the nation (IRC 23/07/2023).

The millet and sorghum harvest are currently underway in major producing regions, including rain-fed, semi-mechanized, and irrigated sectors. However, the harvesting process faces significant disruptions in key production centers, particularly in Al Jazirah, Gedaref, Sennar, White Nile states, and parts of South Kordofan due to the recent expansion of conflict. Issues such as direct fighting, bombardment, civilian terrorization, displacement, and looting are impeding access to farms. Additionally, challenges like shortages of agricultural machinery, exorbitant fuel prices, and a scarcity of labor are exacerbating the situation. The disruptions are expected to cause delays in the harvest, leading to increased pre- and post-harvest losses. This further compounds existing concerns about a below-average national harvest due to significant reductions in cultivated area (FEWS NET 06/01/2024).

The conflict and limited access will have a profound

impact on agricultural production and the availability of food in the upcoming months (UNHCR 31/01/2024). Conflict in central and eastern Sudan, the country's primary region for crop production, poses a significant risk to national food availability. Anticipated disruption to the ongoing main season harvest and the cultivation of winter wheat is expected to compound the already projected below-average production levels. Moreover, the lack of control in looting and destruction of market and household food stocks raises concerns. The potential expansion of the conflict into Gedaref, a crucial location for national grain storage, further intensifies fears of substantial supply losses and adverse impacts on national food availability. This situation may lead to an earlier and atypical onset of the lean season (FEWS NET 06/01/2024).

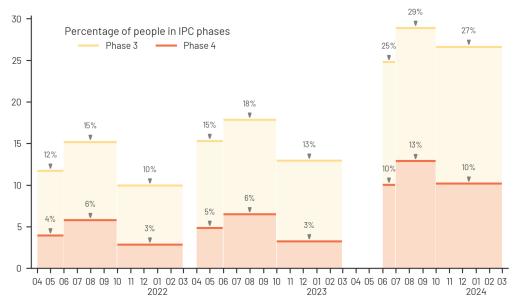
Funding: The Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) cluster requires more funding than any other clusters and is seeking a total of \$581.2 million to provide assistance to 11.4 million people in 2024 (HRP 21/12/2023). According to FTS the cluster in 50.9% funded at the time of writing, underscoring a clear need for additional funding. The UN has appealed for \$4.1 billion to support Sudanese in Sudan (\$2.7 billion) and in neighboring countries (\$1.4 billion) (Reuters 08/02/2024; OCHA 12/02/2024). Currently, the response within Sudan is 43% funded, and the response for neighboring countries is 38% funded (OCHA 12/02/2024).

Food Insecurity Level Trend

Fig: Percentage of people in IPC phase 3 and 4.

Since the start of the conflict there has been a large and sustained increase in the percentage of the population in Crisis levels of food insecurity (Phase 3+).

In low-conflict areas there has been a 7-point increase in the percentage of populations in Phase 3+ between the 2022 and 2023 October



Source: FSTS and Sudan Federal IPC Technical Working Group, ipcinfo.org

to February season from 17% to 24% and limited change in the percentage of the population in Emergency levels (Phase 4), driven by depletion and limited replenishment of food stocks, disrupted migratory patterns for livestock, macro-economic deterioration, and disrupted trade. As a result, low conflict areas are likely to see more people sliding into chronic Crisis levels of food insecurity as the indirect impacts of the conflict on livelihoods and access to food become protract-

The same dynamics are contributing to increases in the percentage of populations in Phase 3+ in high-conflict areas to 45%. The added impact of insecurity is leading to greater deteriorations in the food security situation visible in the in-

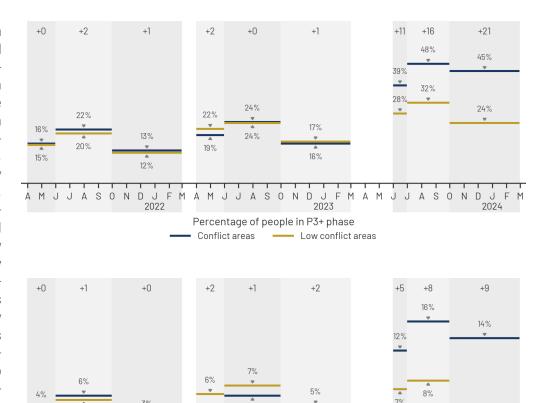


Fig: Percentage of people in IPC phase 3+ (top) and phase 4 (bottom) in conflict areas and low conflict areas. Distribution of states by level of conflict can be found in the Annex. Source: Food Security Technical Secretariat and Sudan Federal IPC Technical Working Group of Sudan, ipcinfo.org

Percentage of people in P4 phase

D J

2023

Low conflict areas

AMJJASON

Conflict areas

crease in the percentage of the population in Phase 4 from 2% to 14% marking a severe situation where

urgent action is needed to save lives and livelihoods.

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Intersection of prices and food security

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Price Trend

In the first few months of the conflict prices remained relatively stable at the national level despite exceptional spikes in the price of some goods and services in conflict areas.

Between June and August this changed as the conflicted became protracted and spread across the country. Prices of cereals grew significantly despite the harvest with the prices in high-conflict areas growing at a faster pace diverging from the remainder of the country. Around the same time the foreign

exchange rate on the black market began to grow at an accelerated rate, impacting the cost of importing critical goods such as fuel.

This escalating inflationary pressure will have a broad multi-sectoral impact on the needs of the population and on the ability of local responders to raise adequate funds from communities within Sudan and the diaspora. Simultaneously, the divergent costs will drive displacement patterns, as communities closer to areas of conflict will seek economic opportunities away from the inflationary impact of the conflict.

5%

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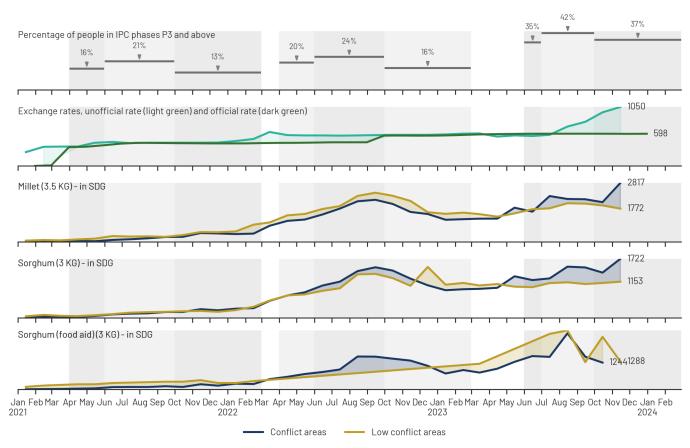


Fig: Exchange rates and food item price trend over time. Source: WFP Market Monitor.

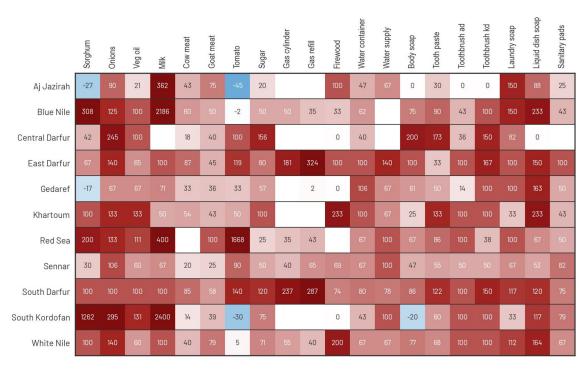


Fig: Percentage of change in price as of October compared to pre-crisis price per State. Source: JMMI, CWG, REACH Initiative, December 2023.

Aid responders will have to keep these trends in mind as they design and budget for programs, factoring in the costs and impacts of local procurement and transport to find an appropriate balance, while attempting to manage the operational impacts of a devaluing currency and the challenges of a currency black market deviating significantly from the official exchange rate.

Association between insecurity level and food price (millet and sorghum)

Conflict, displacement, and looting are affecting access to farms and driving a scarcity of labour, while

shortages of agricultural inputs and the high prices of fuel are leading to delayed harvests. In combination with the disruption of trade this will lead to significant losses in surplus producing locations and shortages in deficit producing ones. The result has been a marked increase in the cost of staple foods across both low and high conflict locations further

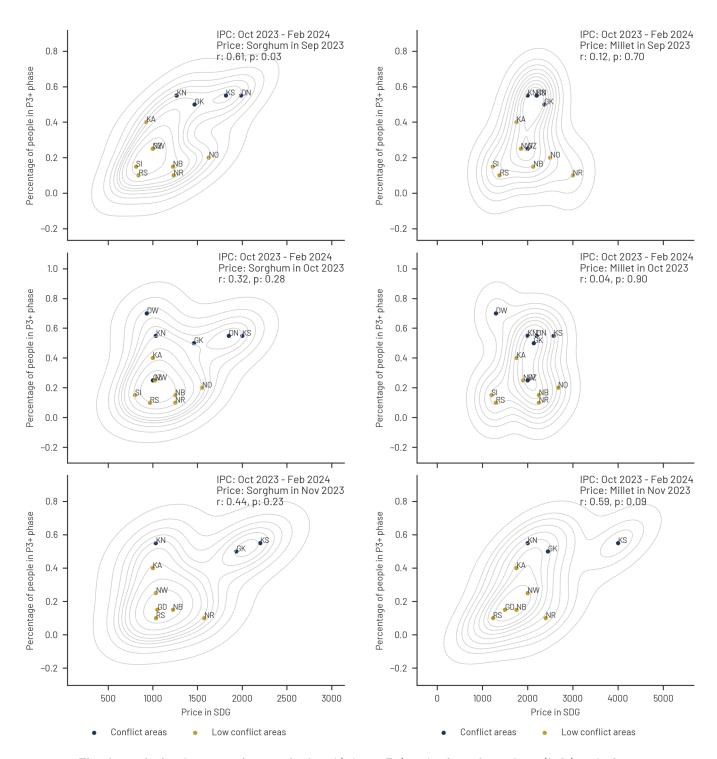


Fig: Association between insecurity level (phase 3+) and price of sorghum (left) and of mil-let (right). Source: IPC and WFP Market Monitor.

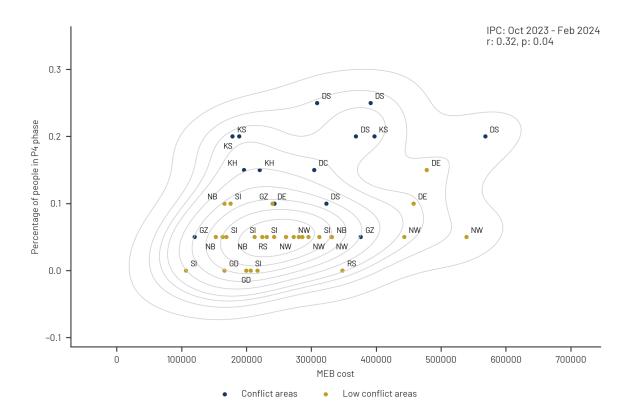


Fig: Association between insecurity level (IPC phase 4) and MEB cost on Oct. 2023 at State level. Source: IPC and JMMI, CWG, REACH Initiative, Dec. 2023.

limiting food access for poorer and vulnerable populations across the country but with particularly severe deterioration in areas of high-conflict.

Association between insecurity level and the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) cost

The chart above shows an association (though a

rather low association) between the MEB cost and the percentage of people in IPC Phase 4, in the 42 localities spread over 11 States covered by the JMMI assessment coordinated by REACH in October 2023. In these localities, as the price of the MEB basket increases, percentage of IDPs also increases.

Coping Mechanism

Over 20 million people across Sudan are now acutely food insecure (<u>WHO</u> 21/11/2023). With food becoming increasingly scarce and expensive, many families have reduced the frequency and quantity of meals and are now eating just one meal of boiled sorghum a day (<u>Islamic relief</u> 13/10/2023). Many people are also eating less nutritious or less preferred food (<u>CARE</u> 01/10/2023). NRC conducted a rapid assessment in Aj Jazirah following the takeover of Wad Madani where 80% of assessed households in reported resorting to negative coping mechanisms like cutting down on meals and prioritizing children when it came to meals (<u>NRC</u> 20/12/2023).

A majority of people across Sudan are currently dependent on food distribution by local authorities and humanitarian organizations (IOM 02/11/2023) or support from relatives (CARE 01/10/2023). People have also been taking loans to buy food since the beginning of the conflict (Islamic relief 13/10/2023). However, with the country experiencing an economic decline, this may not be an option anymore. Those who have been buying food on credit to pay back later at higher rate (Islamic relief 13/10/2023) may also not be able to do so anymore due to soaring prices resulting from destroyed markets and restricted supply routes. In situations of severe food insecuri-

ty, families may resort to negative coping strategies, such as selling their belongings or marrying off their children to obtain enough food to fulfill their basic needs. At even more critical levels of food insecurity, hunger, and starvation will become a daily reality (IRC 04/01/2024).

Studies show that women are disproportionately affected due to negative coping mechanisms. In an assessment conducted by CARE in Aj Jazirah, Khartoum, East Darfur and South Darfur, 81% of the participants indicated a decrease in their food consumption and a shift in their eating patterns due to the conflict. While men were more prone to reporting a personal reduction in their eating habits, a more prevalent trend of reducing overall food intake was observed in households led by females compared to those led by males (CARE 01/10/2023). Both men and women are exploring solutions to address the shortage of cash and the increasing prices of essential items, resorting to actions such as selling assets and borrowing money. Women, in particular, are placing greater emphasis on diversifying their income-earning methods, both in formal and informal economies and utilizing their savings. Meanwhile, men are predominantly depending on the sale of assets as a coping mechanism (<u>CARE</u> 01/10/2023).

During past food security crises like the 1984 famine, various coping strategies proved effective in mitigating the severe consequences of food shortages. Common coping mechanisms in Sudan encom-

passed labor migration, the sale of firewood/charcoal, the consumption of 'wild foods,' and the sale of livestock. However, in the present crisis, access to these coping mechanisms has significantly diminished (Clingendael Institute 02/2024).

While a considerable number of displaced individuals from East and North Sudan have relocated to regions where they can potentially secure employment and food, the need for agricultural labor is expected to remain minimal until the upcoming planting season in June–July 2024 (Clingendael Institute 02/2024). The interruption of the ongoing winter season in the Aj Jazirah irrigation scheme implies that the need for labor during the March harvest will be significantly lower than usual. This dearth of income opportunities will plunge numerous households into economic hardship from January to June (Clingendael Institute 02/2024).

Sudan has a rich "traditional culture of reciprocity and community cohesiveness" providing solace and refuge for those compelled to escape violence. This cultural ethos, prominently observed in Aj Jazirah and East Darfur, was particularly highlighted by female respondents. In these regions, individuals, whether acquaintances or strangers, are actively sharing their resources, including homes, food, water, and clothing, fostering a sense of communal support (CARE 01/10/2023). However, as the conflict prolongs, people's ability to provide support has diminished due to increased strain on their resources.

FSL Response

The chart on the right shows that the percentage of people in IPC phase 4 decreases with the number of partners operating in the localities in October 2023. It also highlights that, in the localities with the highest percentage of people in IPC phase 4, there was 1 or rarely 2 partners operating.

In October 2023, 18 FSL partners reported to be operating in 69 localities, leaving few localities in IPC phase 4 not covered in greater Darfur, greater Kordofan and in Khartoum. In November 2023, the locality coverage is quite better (126 localities) but still, 17 localities in IPC phase 4 were not covered.

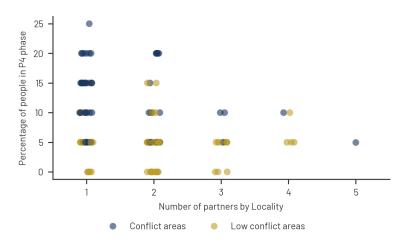


Fig: Relation between number of partners and food insecure people (phase 4). Source: IPC and FSL 3W.

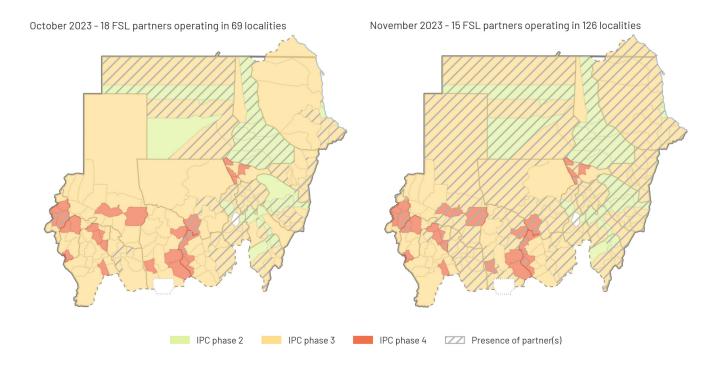


Fig: Locality coverage by FSL operating partners. Source: IPC and FSL 3W.

Intersection of displacement and displacement

IDP Priority Needs

Food security has been a constant priority in IDP households across the country since the conflict broke out. This is most prevalent in areas of high conflict like Darfur, Kordofan and Khartoum. Khartoum, the provinces of Kordofan and Al Jazirah, and the western Darfur region are experiencing widespread hunger, exacerbated by roadblocks, taxation

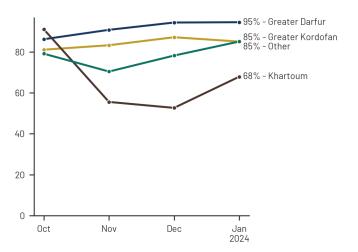


Figure: Percentage of IDP households setting food security as a priority need, as reported by DTM KIs, source: DTM Monthly Displacement Overviews.

demands, and security threats that endanger the supply chains in these areas (ABC News 02/02/2024). Challenges associated with food insecurity encompassed elevated food prices, increased fuel costs for the transportation of goods, restricted food production, high expenses of imported items, and persistent displacement. The Wad Medani area in Aj Jazirah, traditionally a key source of regional food production in Sudan, has been embroiled in continuous conflicts since December 15, 2023. These conflicts have contributed to disruptions in the food supply chain. Additionally, from December to February, Sudan experiences the winter harvesting season, but due to soaring input costs, conflicts, and displacement, some farmers may face difficulties in harvesting, further diminishing the availability of foodstuffs in the upcoming months (IOM 02/02/2024). Families residing in the conflict areas of Sudan may face famine like conditions by the next summer (Reuters 14/12/2023).

Association between food insecurity level and number of IDPs

While IDP populations represent pockets of severe need, there does not seem to be an association between the number of IDPs and the overall level of

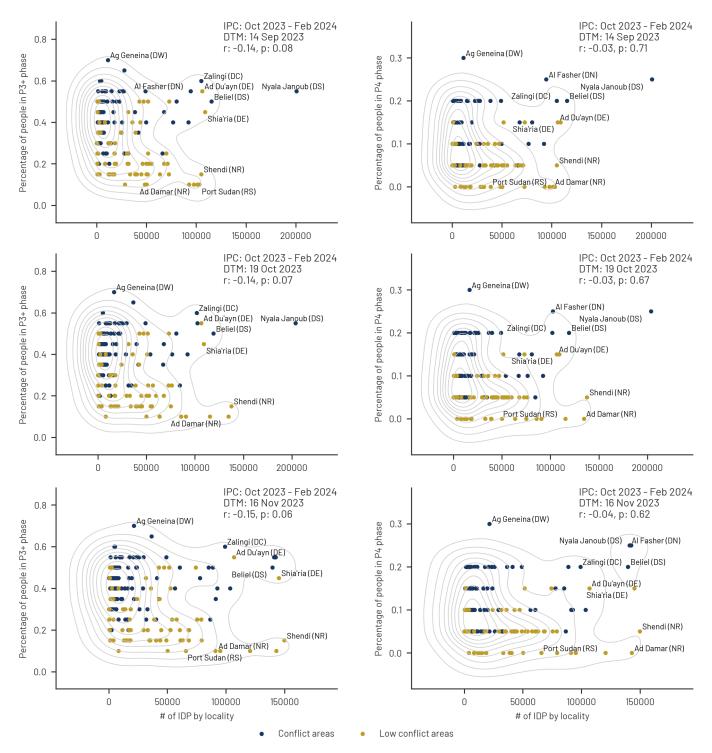


Fig: Association over time between food insecurity level (phas 3+ on the left, phase 4 on the right) and number of IDPs by locality. Source: IPC and DTM weekly snapshots.

food-insecurity. Food insecurity and humanitarian response to it needs to account for both the needs of IDPs while tackling the root causes of hunger that are impacting both IDPs and host communities.

As a result, when prioritising FSL responses with limited resources, special focus needs to be placed on areas that have both large proportions of populations in Phase 3+ and 4 and large numbers of IDPs,

primarily high conflict locations in North and South Darfur as well as in West Darfur.

Other primarily urban settlements with large number of IDPs in low conflict areas such as River Nile and Red Sea are at risk of chronic food insecurity as both the conflict and displacement extends, requiring programming that addresses short term needs and long-term livelihood interventions.

Annex

Level of conflict is a dimension considered in many of the following analyses. It is based on the number of political violence events captured by ACLED and it is detailed in the map below.



NB: Blue Nile, DC: Central Darfur, DE: East Darfur, GD: Gedaref, GZ: Aj Jazirah, KA: Kassala, KH: Khartoum, DN: North Darfur, NO: Northern, KN: North Kordofan, RS: Red Sea, NR: River Nile, SI: Sennar, DS: South Darfur, KS: South Kordofan, DW: West Darfur, GK: West Kordofan, NW: White Nile