

Forgotten Crises

Displacement from Sudan to Eastern Chad

Fact Sheet | March 2024

Introduction

In a world of proliferating humanitarian crises, the newest and highest-profile disasters often dominate the news cycle and receive the most donor attention, shifting focus from the multitude of other needs around the world. These other needs are often classified as **forgotten crises**. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations defines them as

“severe, protracted humanitarian crisis situations where affected populations are receiving no or insufficient international aid and where there is no political commitment to solve the crisis, due in part to a lack of media interest.”¹

In response to the 2024 European Humanitarian Forum’s (EHF) theme of bridging the funding gap and prioritizing forgotten crises, this factsheet delves into the forgotten crisis in Chad-Sudan.

Background and Context

In April 2023, a large-scale conflict broke out between rival military factions in Sudan, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).² Although the violence started in the capital of Khartoum, it quickly spread to the Darfur region and has since engulfed much of the country.³ The intense violence has resulted in mass killings and to date, nearly 14,000 people are estimated to have been killed.⁴ The conflict aggravated Sudan’s pre-existing humanitarian crisis, characterized by hunger and poverty.⁵ As a result, almost 2 million people have braved dangerous landscapes and faced continued protection risks, including severe sexual assault and other forms of violence, to flee to neighboring countries in search of security.⁶

Among these countries Chad has received the most displaced people fleeing Sudan, keeping its borders open and welcoming asylum seekers and refugees despite the country’s own humanitarian challenges.⁷ Even with a lack of food and sanitation and the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) for women and girls, Sudanese asylum seekers and refugees hosted in camps along the Eastern Chad-Sudan border continue to display resilience as they push for survival.⁸

Given that Chad was already hosting approximately 400,000 Sudanese refugees in the East, this influx of new refugees has stretched Chad’s already limited resources.⁹ In addition to refugees from Sudan in the East, the country is also hosting approximately 215,000 internally displaced Chadians and almost 180,000 refugees from other countries in the West and South.¹⁰ The Lake Chad region, at the junction of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon in Western and Central Africa, faces significant humanitarian issues due to a complex nexus of contributing factors, including poverty, insurgent violence, and climate change.¹¹ However, the crises in the region receive limited international attention due to their longstanding nature, which characterizes them as forgotten crises. Media and donor interest in the Chad-Sudan refugee situation is also already waning. There are calls for an increase in assistance from host communities and humanitarian organizations, but funding scarcity has resulted in the de-prioritization of needs in the Chad region. In late 2023, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned it would be forced to pause food assistance to millions of displaced people in Chad due to its funding shortfall.¹² While the deficit of international attention and resources continues, Chad maintains its longstanding culture of generously welcoming refugees, continuing to host and support the entry of Sudanese and other asylum seekers.¹³

Chad-Sudan by the Numbers

10.7M

10.7 million people are currently displaced within and outside Sudan, including 8.1 million displaced since the fighting broke out in April 2023.¹⁴

554K

Chad is hosting over 554,000 newly arrived Sudanese refugees, on top of 400,000 who were already in the country.¹⁵

180K

Chad is also hosting approximately 180,000 other refugees from neighboring countries including the Central African Republic, Cameroon, and Nigeria, more than half of whom are children.¹⁶



HIAS' Impact in Chad-Sudan

HIAS has provided protection and services to refugees, displaced persons, and host communities in Chad for nearly 20 years. The HIAS country office has a presence in the East, N'Djamena, and the South. During previous influxes of Sudanese arrivals, HIAS pre-registered refugees at the border, identified people with specific needs, provided psychological first aid, provided meals at transit centers, and sensitized arrivals on GBV prevention and response. HIAS has also responded to multiple emergencies in Eastern Chad, including unprecedented flooding in 2022. Although the situation in Chad-Sudan can be classified as a forgotten crisis, HIAS, in partnership with the host community and other humanitarian organizations,¹⁷ has continuously provided necessary services to the region's displaced population for decades. During the current stage of this crisis:

- HIAS utilizes strategies centered around **risk reduction, response, and prevention to address GBV** within the refugee community in Chad. Additionally, efforts are made to challenge beliefs and behaviors that enables violence against women

and girls. Through support of survivors' well-being, provision of essential services and safe spaces, and awareness-raising and education programming, **HIAS has impacted over 66,000 people.**

- HIAS considers the **administration of mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS)** a tool to promote the well-being of those impacted by crisis and conflict. **Almost 8,000 people have been reached** through encouraging a supportive environment for healing and MHPSS services such as counseling and community training on how to recognize and respond to emotional distress.
- Due to the uniquely specific needs and vulnerabilities of children, HIAS collaborates with community members to **provide child protection services** and conduct awareness-raising activities. **HIAS has assisted over 48,500 children** directly and indirectly through this work.
- In a context of long-standing refugee populations and new arrivals, HIAS has **trained nearly 30,000 people** in peaceful cohabitation and conflict prevention.

- HIAS partnered with WFP and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to **distribute food and non-food items (NFIs)**. As of November 2023, **over 171,000 people** across 13 refugee camps in the East have been provided with food and other assistance by HIAS since the conflict broke out in Sudan. NFIs include mosquito nets, plastic sheeting, blankets, and water collection buckets, among other items.

Given the impact that has been made with limited resources, it can be presumed that with renewed political commitments to address the crisis, media attention, and increased funding, many more individuals can be positively impacted.

Recommendations: Sudan Displacement to Chad

Drawing on HIAS' decades-long experience in Chad-Sudan and in accordance with the 2024 EHF's objectives of drawing attention to forgotten crises, promoting durable solutions, and improving stakeholder cooperation, HIAS recommends the following:

- The European Union (EU) Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič recently announced that the EU will provide 117 million euros of funding for humanitarian assistance, including € 45 million for Chad and €72 million for Sudan, to support life-saving emergency aid and assistance for children's education.¹⁸ Building on this announcement, HIAS recommends that the EU and Member States should utilize current funding and provide additional flexible funding for the response—without compromising existing humanitarian programming—to enable:
 - » construction and rehabilitation of new and existing camps;
 - » protection response, using a gender-sensitive approach;
 - » support for host communities to promote peaceful coexistence and social cohesion in the long term.

- The EU and Member States should act to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law to protect civilians, facilitate aid worker access, and ensure the delivery of assistance to Sudan and Chad.
- The EU and Member States should allocate more funding specifically to combat GBV and provide survivors with healthcare, MHPSS, and educational programming as a preventive measure.
- The EU and Member States should increase diplomatic pressure on actors fueling the crisis in Sudan and encourage them to prioritize peaceful solutions.
- The EU and Member States should work with the Chadian government, host communities, and local NGOs to address the root causes of violence and poverty in the Lake Chad region and at the border by increasing long-term investments, addressing drivers of violent, insurgent groups, and fostering community-based development and services.

About the Center

The HIAS Center for Refugee Policy seeks to advance the rights of refugees and displaced people across the globe by publishing research and policy analysis, generating new policy-relevant ideas, and bringing new voices to the public conversation. The Center leverages HIAS' global presence and over a century of experience to provide practical responses and policy solutions to the most pressing challenges concerning displaced populations.

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Endnotes

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