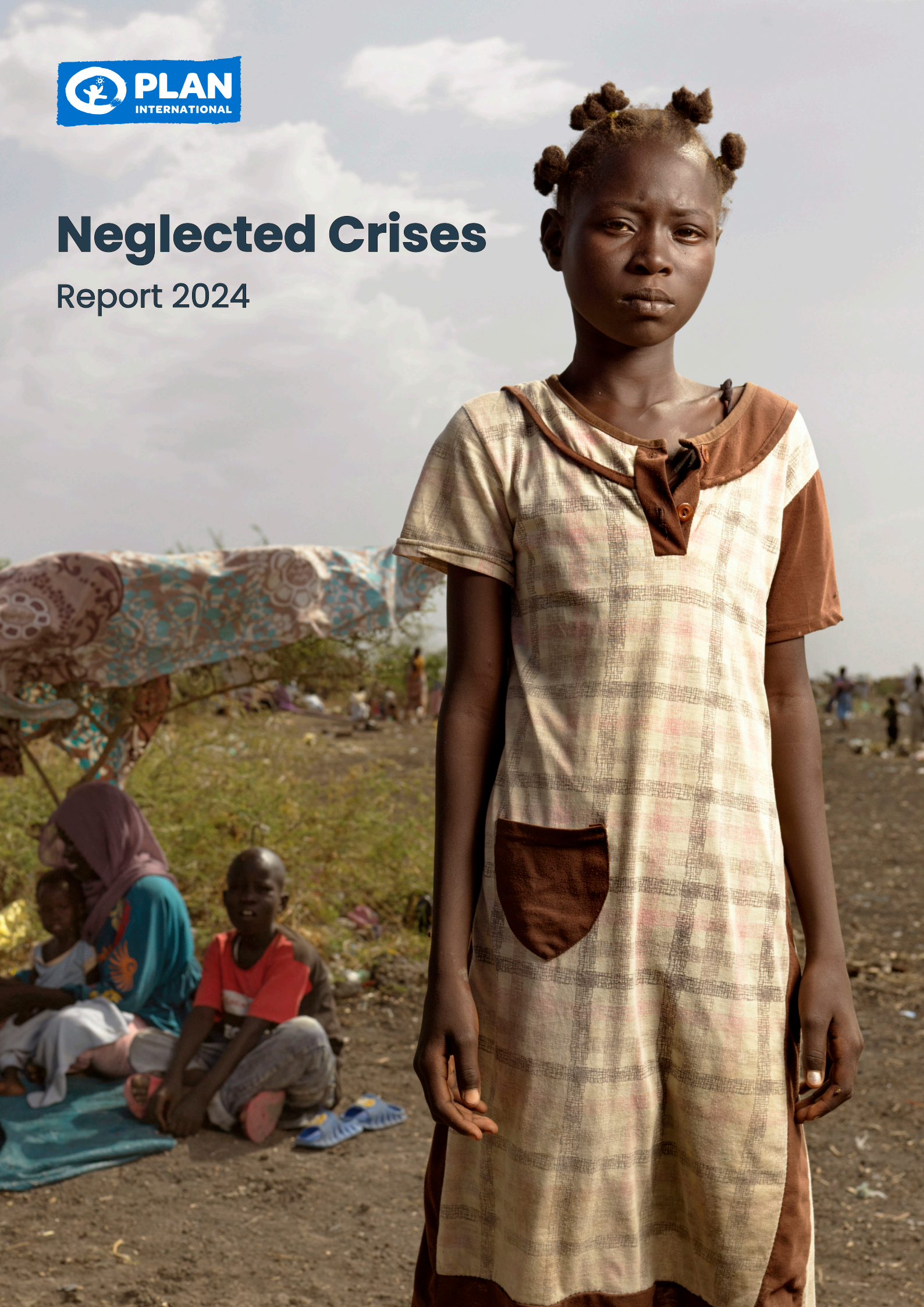




Neglected Crises

Report 2024



This Neglected Crises report spotlights five crises that have long been neglected: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Sudan and South Sudan. In particular, Plan International has compiled this report to bring attention to the children trying to survive these neglected crises. The crises included are all officially recognized as Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) Situations of Concern by the United Nations. We urge the UN Member States to live up to their responsibilities in implementing UN Security Council resolution 1325, which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. Furthermore, we ask the UN Member States to step up the Youth, Peace and Security agenda as stipulated in resolution 2250 - the vital role of young people in peace processes and conflict resolution cannot be overstated.



Burkina Faso

Since 2022, the security situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated, severely impacting the human rights situation. **The number of people killed doubled in 2023** with over 8,000 people reportedly killed.¹ Armed groups have escalated their attacks, leading to a surge in displacement and humanitarian needs. The ongoing insecurity in Burkina Faso continues to impede access, with many areas remaining hard to reach in recent months, posing significant challenges for humanitarian operations. In 2024, the number of individuals needing humanitarian aid has risen to 6.3 million,² up from 4.6 million the previous year, including 3.4 million children. Despite the critical need, only 16.2% of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) has been funded in 2024, highlighting a significant funding shortfall.³

The ongoing crisis has severely disrupted agricultural activities, exacerbating food insecurity. Farmers are abandoning their lands due to escalating violence, impacting a region where agriculture is the primary livelihood. As a result, malnutrition rates remain high, with 480,000 children under five and 131,500 pregnant/breastfeeding

women expected to experience acute malnutrition, including 113,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

Due to the humanitarian crisis and significant security incidents endangering civilians, the number of refugees in neighboring countries have nearly tripled to 200,000 according to UNHCR figures. Additionally, the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso now stands at approximately 2 million as of March 2023, with **children comprising over 58.5% of this displaced population.**

The humanitarian crisis, fueled by insecurity, political instability, and climate change, continues to reduce access to basic social services, particularly education and healthcare. In April 2024, an estimated 5,319 schools closed due to insecurity, affecting 833,818 students and 24,308 teachers. **These closures disproportionately impact girls**, leading to higher rates of child marriage and reduced educational opportunities. The reduction in healthcare services also remains a major concern, especially in areas where referrals and medical evacuations have become increasingly difficult due to insecurity.

Plan International is disturbed by the increasing grave violations against children in Burkina Faso, including killing, maiming, abduction, recruitment, attacks on schools and hospitals, and sexual violence, particularly against adolescent girls.

Plan International's response to the crisis

Plan International Burkina Faso started operating in 1976. To help the most vulnerable in Burkina Faso, Plan International provides cash transfers, food, shelter for IDPs, and hygiene kits. We help local and internally displaced women promote peaceful collaboration and income generation. Plan International Burkina Faso works with local actors, duty-bearers, and government entities in 12 out of the 13 regions in Burkina Faso to operationalize the humanitarian response. Plan International Burkina Faso concentrates its efforts on the six priority regions identified by the humanitarian community: Sahel, Centre-Nord, Nord, Est, Boucle du Mouhoun, and Centre-Est. Our response strategy is designed to support the most vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on girls, children, and youth, including those with disabilities, in these targeted regions.



Recommendations on Burkina Faso

- Urge all parties involved in the conflict to refrain from attacking the education sector. Collaborate with humanitarian and development partners to strengthen the capacity of these parties in understanding and adhering to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Safe School Declarations principles. Non-state armed groups must cease attacks on schools, and security forces must stop using them for any purpose. The safety and well-being of children must also be central to decisions regarding school reopening.
- Call on all parties to uphold their human rights and international humanitarian law obligations by ceasing all grave violations against children: recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access. Recruited children, including girls, must be treated as victims and identified and released to child protection actors immediately.
- The international community must pay more attention to this growing crisis. We urge donors to promote greater equity in their global responses by protecting the most vulnerable populations, particularly children affected by conflicts.
- Humanitarian programming needs to ensure that child protection is included as priority actions in response plans. UN agencies, INGOs and CSOs need to support the continuity of access to quality and inclusive education that supports children's psychosocial needs, as well the timely referrals to child protection services for all school-aged children.

Mali

Mali is experiencing a multifaceted humanitarian crisis driven by severe insecurity, socio-economic challenges, and climate change impacts. The crisis is particularly characterized by persistent conflict involving non-state armed groups, resulting in widespread instability and violence. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) complicated both the security and humanitarian situation and the response capacity of

humanitarian actors. Moreover, only 31% of the funds needed to deliver humanitarian aid were mobilized in 2023. This situation has engendered a dire humanitarian crisis where an estimated 7.1 million people in Mali will require humanitarian aid, including 23% women and 54% children.¹

Due to insecurity and restrictions, humanitarian access has become increasingly restricted following clashes between Malian Military Forces and



Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). **The prolonged conflict has driven forced displacement, deepened poverty, and exacerbated the adverse effects of climate shocks on food security.** Humanitarians also face life-threatening challenges in delivering aid to vulnerable, besieged communities, with no end to the violence in sight.

Restrictions on movement, imposed by armed groups to fully control the circulation of goods and people, further restrict access. This context of instability pushes civilians to repeatedly displace in search of safety across the country and elsewhere. As of May 2024, Mali had roughly 354,739 IDPs.¹¹ Additionally, an estimated 210,000 Malian refugees remain in neighboring countries.¹² According to multi-sectoral assessments conducted in July 2023, the needs mentioned by displaced people were mainly food (97%), shelter (50%), non-food items (37%), and clean water and sanitation (24%).¹³

Like many of the Sahel countries, insecurity compounded with climatic shocks has severely disrupted agricultural activities in Mali, aggravating food insecurity and malnutrition. The number of people experiencing acute food insecurity at crisis level or worse (IPC 3 to 5) has sharply increased to 1.4 million in the period of June 2023 – May

2024. Simultaneously, the nutritional crisis remains dire, with nearly 1.1 million children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition.¹⁴

The humanitarian crisis in Mali has similarly affected the fundamental right of many children to access quality education. Over half a million school-aged children lack access to education due to the closure of over 1,700 schools, predominantly in northern and central Mali. This situation has deprived 522,000 children of learning opportunities and affected over 10,400 teachers as of February 2024.¹⁵ This issue is particularly severe in regions like Timbuktu, where the majority of children are out of school. The lack of formal education leaves many children, especially those in displaced communities, vulnerable to exploitation and deprived of opportunities for future growth.

The United Nations has verified in Mali the killing and maiming of children; recruitment and use; sexual violence, including rape; abduction; denial of humanitarian access; and attacks against hospitals and schools.¹⁶ These atrocities underscore the urgent need for concerted international efforts to protect the rights and safety of children caught in the conflict.

Recommendations on Mali

- The international community must collaborate with Malian authorities to improve security measures that ensure safe humanitarian access and protect aid workers. Efforts should include negotiating safe passages and advocating for compliance with International Humanitarian law (IHL) by all conflict parties.
- Call on all parties to uphold their human rights and international humanitarian law obligations by ceasing all grave violations against children: recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access. Engage with authorities to ensure that Mali's children do not suffer in the shadows. Support their protection efforts and humanitarian needs by providing both political and financial backing.
- The international community must restore and enhance development aid for improving access to essential services, including education, healthcare, and food security. This should also include adaptive strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change. Increased funding should target the most vulnerable populations, in particular children, addressing the root causes of displacement and poverty.
- Urge all parties involved in armed conflict to immediately cease attacks on educational institutions and refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes. Immediate actions are required to reopen schools, provide educational resources, and recruit teachers in conflict-affected regions. Initiatives should also focus on creating alternative educational opportunities to ensure continuity of learning for displaced children.



Plan International's response to the crisis

Plan International has been active in Mali since 1976, operating across most regions of the country, which provides us with a comprehensive perspective on the humanitarian situation nationwide. Our initiatives include education projects, child protection, early childhood development, employability, and reproductive health and rights. We also engage in various cross-cutting themes such as food security/nutrition,

health, and peacebuilding. With a presence in over 1,000 communities, we facilitate community dialogues to empower young people as active citizens and advocate for the cessation of harmful practices. In humanitarian zones, Plan International executes multiple nexus component projects and collaborates with the Rapid Response Mechanism to aid individuals in distress.



Niger



Niger continues to confront a complex humanitarian emergency characterized by persistent insecurity, endemic poverty, and the impacts of climate change and political instability. Following the coup in July 2023 that shook Niger's political landscape, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed sanctions, which included the temporary closing of both land and air borders. However, these sanctions have had unintended consequences beyond political pressure. Instead, they have added to the instability, because goods and essential humanitarian supplies, including nutritional aid and medical provisions, have been held up at the border, jeopardizing the lives of the 4.5 million people in need¹⁷, including 2.4 million children. Cuts and reduction in international financial aid have also hindered the new government's capacity to deliver public services effectively.

Despite the partial lifting of sanctions in February 2024, humanitarian needs in Niger remain severe, and food prices stay elevated due to increased production and transportation costs, insecurity, and drought- keeping

them significantly above the five-year average in the Sahel Region.¹⁸ More than 80% of Niger's population relies on agriculture for their food and income, but their livelihoods and food security are increasingly threatened by drought and flooding. Accordingly, food insecurity has reached unprecedented levels, increasing the demand for humanitarian assistance. According to Cadre Harmonisé projections, more than 3.4 million people across Niger are expected to face Crisis—IPC 3—or worse levels of acute food insecurity during the June-to-August lean season, when food is most scarce.¹⁹ **Moreover, 47% of children under 5 years of age in Niger are chronically malnourished** and over 12.2 % are acutely malnourished.²⁰ At the same time, humanitarian access remains a significant challenge in Niger, hindered by mutual suspicion between the government and armed groups, posing a major obstacle to all humanitarian efforts.

The insecurity in Niger continues to force the closure of numerous schools and leads to significant displacement. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that a total of 181,000 conflict displacements were

reported in Niger in 2023, the highest figure since data became available in 2015.²¹ As of March 2024, approximately 937 primary and secondary schools across Niger remain closed, impacting 73,876 students, including 35,460 girls.²² Of particular concern is Tillabéri region, where 94% of the closed schools are located. The persistent disruption in education has widened socio-economic disparities and deprived many children of essential learning opportunities. **Countless girls, in particular, are left without access to education,** heightening their vulnerability to negative coping mechanisms and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Plan International remains disturbed about the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin. In 2023, the United Nations verified more than double the number of grave violations against children in armed conflict compared to 2022.²³ Furthermore, the United Nations has documented grave violations against children in Niger, including killings, maiming, recruitment by armed groups, sexual violence, abduction, and attacks on hospitals and schools.

Recommendations on Niger

- Demand that all parties uphold their obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Rights Law (IHRL); allow and facilitate safe, timely, and unimpeded humanitarian access. Administrative and bureaucratic constraints on the movement of humanitarian personnel and goods within the country, coupled with border closures with Benin, have a profound impact on internal supply chains and transportation costs.
- The international community must swiftly reinstate and increase aid assistance to Niger, with emphasis on basic needs, such as health, education, clean water and sanitation, as well as resilience and livelihoods. The Niger's population access to basic services has been strongly impacted by the decision to reduce/suspend development funding. Suspensions and cuts in development aid have had significant repercussions for the population's access to basic services, notably in terms of education in Niger. This fuels cycles of poverty and vulnerability, elevating the risk of child recruitment into armed groups, child marriage, and exploitation.
- While countering violent extremism remains a critical priority, the current militarized approach to the crisis is inadvertently fueling vulnerability and insecurity. A military approach alone cannot effectively address the complex, long-term challenges posed by the crisis. Instead, a comprehensive response is needed, embracing the triple nexus approach – which must prioritize addressing the underlying drivers and root causes of the conflict to achieve lasting peace and stability.
- Non-State Armed Groups must immediately cease their attacks on schools, and security forces must discontinue the occupation and use of schools and universities for any military purposes. Without access to education, a generation of children will grow up without the skills they need to contribute to their country. Similarly, the parties must engage with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children and to urge accountability for all perpetrators.



Plan International's response to the crisis

Plan International has been working in Niger since 1998 to promote children's rights. Plan International Niger has positioned itself as a leading organization on eradicating child marriage and promoting gender equality in the country by investing in young girls and women to become the leaders of social and economic change. We also implement programs to strengthen

resilience, provide access to quality health services and to support children, especially girls to go to school and gain skills to succeed. Plan International Niger is also implementing projects to create a resilient society in which young people from the Maradi region have access to promising economic opportunities and decision-making responsibilities.



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Before the current conflict, Sudan was already dealing with violence and displacement that began with the Darfur crisis in 2003. The country hosted over 1 million refugees primarily from South Sudan and Northern Ethiopia.²⁴ The ousting of long-time authoritarian leader Omar al-Bashir in 2019 initially raised hopes for a transition to civilian rule in Sudan. However, a military coup two years later dismantled the transitional civilian government, triggering the country into political and economic chaos and reigniting intercommunal conflicts. Sudan has also faced significant impacts from extreme weather events associated with climate change, such as floods and droughts. These events have had severe consequences for hundreds of thousands of people across the country, resulting in the destruction of crops and livestock and worsening food insecurity among families.

Since the 15th of April 2023, violent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan's capital of Khartoum sparked a nationwide conflict that has quickly become one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. **A year into the conflict, Sudan is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.** Nearly 25 million people, of whom over 14 million are children,

now require humanitarian assistance²⁵ and more than 15,000 people have been killed, according to ACLED.²⁶ Like most other humanitarian agencies, Plan could not continue with operations in Khartoum and in Al Jazeera State due to the fighting and insecurity.

The ongoing violence and lack of basic necessities have compelled many to abandon their homes. By April 2024, over 8.6 million people (16% of the total population) had been displaced since the conflict began²⁷ - **making Sudan the largest displacement crisis in the world.** Many have sought refuge either within Sudan or in neighboring countries. This includes over 2 million who have fled to neighboring nations.²⁸ Without a resolution to the crisis, hundreds of thousands will be forced to flee in search of refuge and basic assistance.

In April 2024, over 40% of Sudan's population— about 18 million people—are experiencing severe food insecurity, with their needs continuing to worsen over time.²⁹ Sudan is among the countries hardest hit by climate change, with direct impacts of the climate crisis severely affecting food security and agriculture. This poses significant challenges for the 80% of Sudanese who depend on agriculture and pastoralism for their livelihoods. The

latest IPC analysis on Sudan reveals that **Sudan has become the world's largest hunger crisis with over half of the country experiencing severe food insecurity**. 25.6 million people are projected to face acute food insecurity or worse (IPC 3 or above) between June and September, coinciding with the lean season. The IPC alert has also **classified 755,000 people as living in Catastrophe** (IPC Phase 5), the most severe classification on the IPC scale in 10 states including Greater Darfur (all five states), South and North Kordofan, Blue Nile, Al Jazeera, and Khartoum. Another 8.5M people (18 percent of the population) face Emergency (IPC Phase 4).³⁰ In El-Fasher, the ongoing siege has left hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped, suffering from severe hunger and thirst due to a lack of food and water.³¹

In Sudan, approximately 65% of the population lacks access to healthcare, with the situation worsened by ongoing conflict, leaving 70% to 80% of hospitals in conflict-affected regions non-functional and severely limiting medical service where it is needed most.³² This critical healthcare collapse has led to major outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, dengue fever, measles, and malaria. Furthermore, insecurity, displacement, and limited access to essential supplies such as medicines, medical equipment, electricity, and clean water remain significant obstacles to providing healthcare throughout Sudan. As a direct result, over 11,000

suspected cases of cholera have been reported,³³ while other diseases continue to proliferate due to the breakdown of basic public health services. The healthcare crisis in Sudan is escalating rapidly, underscoring the urgent need for international support and intervention to prevent further devastation.

The growing hunger crisis has strong gendered impacts, with **women and girls facing increased risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence**. The combination of displacement, insecurity, and limited healthcare infrastructure further exacerbates women and girls' vulnerability, highlighting an urgent need for comprehensive support and protection measures to address these critical issues. Reports of gender-based violence (GBV) in Sudan have drastically surged, encompassing alarming incidents such as kidnapping, forced marriage, intimate partner violence, conflict-related sexual violence, and child marriage.³⁴ According to the GBV Sub-Sector, even before December 2023, when clashes in Al Jazeera State forced multiple displacements for individuals and families, 6.7 million people within Sudan were already at risk of gender-based violence (GBV).³⁵ This crisis is exacerbated by the fact that over 1.5 million IDPs are women and girls of reproductive age, facing severe challenges in accessing essential reproductive and maternal health

services.³⁶ The GBV Sub-Sector in Sudan cautions that without a rapid increase in funding and enhanced diplomatic efforts to secure humanitarian access, millions of women and girls requiring GBV prevention and response services will continue to be deprived of their right to protection.

The conflict has concurrently affected the education sector in Sudan. After a year of the conflict, the majority of the country's schools remain closed, with **90 per cent of the 19 million school-aged children having not attended school for a full academic year.**³⁷ Moreover, the growing practice of using schools as shelters, which has reached as high as 100% in certain areas, impacts both displaced children and particularly those in host communities. In the regions of North Darfur and South Kordofan,

Plan International Sudan has recently launched a project designed to provide classrooms for informal education at a gathering point for displaced people.

Thousands of children have been killed or injured, and countless more exposed to grave protection risks including sexual violence and recruitment or use in the conflict. The United Nations has verified in Sudan the killing and maiming of children; recruitment and use; sexual violence, including rape; abduction; denial of humanitarian access; and attacks against hospitals and schools.³⁸ Plan International is concerned about the staggering increase of 480% in grave violations against children in Sudan.³⁹ The impacts will be devastating, traumatizing an entire generation, and contributing to extensive psychosocial distress.



Plan International's response to the crisis

Plan International Sudan has been operating for more than 45 years. Since the start of the conflict, which has created the **world's largest displacement of children**, Plan International has responded by providing mobile child-friendly spaces, where we provide mental health and psychosocial support services, parenting and adolescent life skills programs, case management services for separated and unaccompanied children, including family tracing and reunification, as well as alternative care programs. Additionally, we provide programs aimed at responding to and mitigating the risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), as well as advocacy initiatives for children associated with armed

forces and armed groups (CAAFAG). Due to the ongoing crisis, Plan has scaled up its humanitarian efforts to address the increased needs across the country. Plan International Sudan operates in 5 states, including North Darfur, South and North Kordofan, Kassala, El Gedaref, and White Nile, with Port Sudan added as a coordination office. Our efforts encompass Child Protection in Emergencies, Education in Emergencies, Food Security and Livelihoods, Health & Nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and Non-Food Items, including multipurpose Cash Assistance. Additionally, we are responding to the rise in GBV cases nationwide and addressing refugee needs in neighboring countries.



Recommendations on Sudan

- Call on the international community to urgently increase funding for the humanitarian response in Sudan and to consider the comprehensive impact of the hunger crisis. The HRP is only funded at 16.8 % as of June 2024.⁴⁰ Adequate funding for food security, nutrition, WASH, sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and protection clusters—covering child protection and GBV prevention and response—is crucial to mitigate the escalating impacts of rising food insecurity both short- and long-term. This funding must also reach national and local organizations, including women’s groups and mutual aid networks.
- Urge the warring parties to urgently come to the negotiating table and agree to an immediate ceasefire and to promptly implement measures to avoid exacerbating the hunger crisis. They must fulfill their obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to protect humanitarian workers and ensure safe access for delivering aid to those in need. They must also refrain from targeting, looting, or unintentionally damaging essential sites and infrastructure crucial to food systems, such as markets, agricultural and livestock lands, as well as food storage facilities.
- Call on the international community, especially those with influence, to promptly encourage both parties to prioritize and execute policies that safeguard children, prevent gender-based violence (GBV) risks, and assist in the implementation of national action plans and policies aimed at protecting children and preventing children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG). Additionally, increased funding and financial resources are essential for programs focusing on child protection and GBV prevention in Sudan. The GBV Sub-Sector in Sudan warns that without a rapid increase in funding and stronger diplomatic efforts to secure humanitarian access, millions of women and girls requiring GBV prevention and response services will remain underserved, despite their right to protection.
- Urge all parties to maintain an effective, efficient, and reliable communication network across Sudan, ensuring that these vital lines of communication remain operational to support humanitarian efforts. The nationwide telecommunication shutdown during February and March 2024 severely impacted the delivery of life-sustaining assistance to millions. Effective communication is vital for local NGOs and community groups that depend on the cell phone network to coordinate aid, gather information, receive funds, and manage essential services.

South Sudan



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South Sudan has been facing a dire humanitarian crisis, complicated further by the conflict that has erupted in Sudan. After gaining independence from Sudan in 2011, the country has been struggling with severe challenges due to ongoing armed conflict, economic instability, and natural disasters. An estimated 9.4 million people were projected to need emergency assistance and protection in 2023, including 2.2 million women, 4.9 million children and 337,000 refugees - this reflects 76% of the country's population.⁴¹

The civil war that broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, followed by subsequent subnational conflicts, has destroyed people's lives and livelihoods and has increased existing vulnerabilities. **The violence has led to mass displacement**, with an estimated 2.2 million people internally displaced and 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees being hosted in neighboring countries in 2022.⁴² The conflict between rival factions in Sudan has had a profound ripple effect on its southern neighbor, leading to a significant

increase in the number of refugees entering South Sudan. As of August 2024, over 769,200 individuals have fled over the border, including more than 390,200 children.⁴³ This also includes a large number of South Sudanese returning after previously fleeing to Sudan. The influx of displaced people has strained the country's resources and overwhelmed existing refugee camps and facilities.

Alongside mass displacement, South Sudan faces severe food insecurity. Cyclical conflict, a fragile economy, inflation, low agricultural production, and extreme weather patterns due to climate change have created an untenable situation where households are unable to grow or buy food. **South Sudan ranks among the five most climate-vulnerable countries in the world.** In 2022, South Sudan experienced some of the worst floods in decades, which worsened food and water scarcity and disrupted livelihoods. It was estimated that around 8 million people or 64% of the population would face severe food insecurity by the peak of the 2023 lean season (between April and July).⁴⁴ Nearly 1.4 million children under the age of five were at risk of malnutrition. The Sudan crisis has further exacerbated the already precarious situation. In August 2024, **8 to 9 million people (close to 70% of the population) are experiencing acute food insecurity.**

South Sudanese fleeing the Sudan conflict are returning to areas where access to food and income is extremely low. In addition, heavy rainfall during August and September 2024 has resulted in extensive flooding, destroying homes, livelihoods, infrastructure, agriculture, and health services. 735,00 people were affected, and 65,000 people were displaced.⁴⁵ The IPC analysis on South Sudan projects a further escalation of circumstances at the end of 2024: The elections that are held in December bring with it the risk of heightened violence. Increased violence, in combination with the floods, can further decrease access to food and income in the second half of 2024. If this escalation is not addressed, **the IPC forecasts an outbreak of famine (IPC Phase 5).**⁴⁶

The healthcare system in South Sudan has been severely underfunded and cannot adequately address the dire health needs of its population. **Healthcare infrastructure has been crippled by the ongoing conflict**, resulting in a shortage of essential medicines and healthcare workers. Outbreaks of diseases are increasingly common, due to increased flooding and water sources becoming contaminated. An influx of refugees has further stretched the healthcare system beyond its limits. Health facilities being overwhelmed has led to a rise in preventable diseases and

a deteriorating health situation for both local and refugee populations. Malaria remains the leading cause of morbidity and mortality, with 2,6 million cases reported in 2024 by the end of August.⁴⁷ Other major concerns include outbreaks of polio and the measles.

Even before the recent crisis, **South Sudan had the second highest prevalence rate of reported gender-based violence in East Africa.**⁴⁸ The overlapping shocks of conflict, floods, hunger and economic deterioration have increased the risk of gender-based violence for women and girls. Pre-existing patriarchal norms and unequal power relations are exacerbated in times of crisis, increasing women and girls' vulnerability. The most common risks include physical or sexual violence, rape, sexual exploitation, and displacement. In addition, **girls face higher risks of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school.** There are no adequate sexual and reproductive healthcare services to meet growing needs. With refugee camps overflowing and tensions rising, it is crucial to incorporate support and protection for children, particularly girls, in any measures of international support.

The UN has verified grave violations against children in South Sudan, including; recruitment and use, the

killing and maiming of children, sexual violence, and abduction. Schools and hospitals have been used for military purposes, leading to forced evacuation. Plan International is particularly concerned about the situation of adolescent girls and unaccompanied children, who are at the highest risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Plan International's response to the crisis

Plan International has been operating in South Sudan since 2006, providing both long-term development programmes and humanitarian assistance. We work to support children, especially girls, to access their rights to education, health, protection and economic security. We are also working to bring lasting positive change to a country that has emerged from decades of civil war and continues to experience instability and insecurity. Our humanitarian efforts have been ramped up since the start of the conflict in Sudan. Plan International South Sudan operates across 19 counties in the Eastern and Central Equatoria States, the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Lakes, Unity, and the Upper Nile. To ensure child protection we have set up child-friendly spaces and we provide psychosocial support. Education services often break down in emergencies, so we have set up



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temporary learning spaces for children and we have distributed educational materials. Food and nutrition supplements are distributed to combat malnutrition, emergency shelters are set up and non-food items such as clothing, blankets, and essential household items are provided to displaced families. Gender-based violence prevention and response has been crucial, including medical care, legal and support services for survivors.

In addition, we also work together with youth in peacebuilding and leadership programmes to foster resilience and promote conflict resolution in fragile settings. Youth, and particularly girls and young women, have a powerful part to play in peace processes. Political participation is a key factor in making sure their voices are heard.

Recommendations on South Sudan

- Donors are urged to increase multi-year funding to scale up emergency response efforts across South Sudan. This increased support is crucial to address increased humanitarian needs as a result of the armed conflict in neighboring Sudan. Support must be ramped up in order to address urgent needs of displaced populations and protect vulnerable children, especially adolescent girls, from gender-based violence.
- The donor community, United Nations and INGOs must continue to promote enhanced collaboration and coordination among humanitarian clusters to achieve a cohesive response, mobilize resources, and align on a comprehensive strategy to effectively address the multifaceted dimensions of the humanitarian crisis.
- The international community is called on to integrate emergency interventions with peacebuilding and development initiatives, promoting a nexus way of working. Given the fragile security situation in South Sudan and the structural social development challenges, merely ramping up the humanitarian response is not sufficient nor sustainable.
- Donors must recognize that peacebuilding approaches are typically supported through development cooperation. Therefore support is needed for local and national actors, institutions, or organizations with expert knowledge of addressing power structures that drive this conflict. In particular, community-based women's and child rights organisations working in South Sudan.



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About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

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