

Key highlights

The Protection Sector reconstituted its **Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)** at national level, composed of the UN agencies, international and national NGOs working in the protection sector. The SAG advises on the strategic directions and priorities of the Sector. The **2023 Strategic Priorities**, which will be aligned with the HRP and the Sector's multi-year strategy, will be issued in March 2023.

The Protection Sector briefed its membership on the **situation in the Gathering Sites in El Geneina, West Darfur** against the backdrop of the State Government's efforts to encourage IDPs to relocate to places of former displacement or return to places of origin. The briefing revealed the results of the recently concluded intention survey among the population, including their concerns which mostly relate to security and access to services, as well as on the intended next steps to address the situation through an inter-agency approach. Of note is that an increasing number of IDP gathering sites in El Geneina are facing eviction threats, up from 11 sites at the end of 2022 to 17 sites by the end of February 2023, hosting some 18,000 IDPs.

4th of April is International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action! The Mine Action operations in Sudan are preparing to commemorate this important day.

The **conflict in Blue Nile** broke out in July 2022, and forcibly displaced some 128,000 people in Blue Nile, to Sennar, White Nile and other states (DTM). Many needs remain unaddressed.

The recent distribution of dignity kits by UNFPA and partners coordinated through the GBV AoR in Blue Nile brought much needed support to adolescent females and women affected by the conflict.

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Protection Developments

Darfur

- Tensions in the Abu Gamra area of North Darfur reportedly eased since the clashes in late January. While no major displacement has been observed, Saraf Omra and Elserif localities of North Darfur saw continued small-scale arrivals of IDPs from West and South Darfur. Displacement (of some 150 persons) was also reported in late February in Al Firdous locality, East Darfur, following violence that saw the deliberate burning of several houses.
- Several serious GBV incidents were reported in late February in North Darfur (Zam Zam IDP camp) and South Darfur (Kass locality). Service providers have been mobilized in response.
- The deteriorating security situation in Central Darfur has a detrimental impact on access to humanitarian assistance. For example, following the attack on the Wali's convoy in mid-February, all humanitarian movement along the Guldo-Golo road has been suspended affecting the movement of humanitarian supplies to Wasat Jebel Marrah locality. Efforts are ongoing to remove the suspension.
- Several IDP sites have been affected by fires during this dry season, including El Neem camp in East Darfur, Salah Eldin School Gathering Site in El Geneina, West Darfur, and Dali camp in Tawila, North Darfur leading to the complete destruction of several houses. Humanitarian assistance alongside community-based protection measures on fire prevention is provided.

Kordofan

- People internally displaced from Lagawa are struggling to pursue a durable solution, although many wish to return to their area of origin. However, they report to feel unsafe as the security situation has yet to improve.
- The situation in the northern part of West Kordofan State has destabilized and become volatile after the youth of one tribe called for their tribe's supremacy as the only legitimate inhabitant tribe.
- In Kordofan States, a birth certificate top-up fee was imposed for parents to obtain a birth certificate for their children who are one year old above (late registration). This additional fee, not affordable to many, is translating in parents not seeking the issuance of birth certificates, creating risks for their children, including potential risks of statelessness.
- Children in conflict with law were also reported on the rise due to multiple factors, predominantly economic difficulties. In January and February, it was reported that children were exposed to forced recruitment in a significant proportion of all recruits.

Blue Nile State

- Despite the Framework Agreement on Peaceful Co-existence of 15 Jan 2023, a trust deficit between the communities prevails and shows in movement restrictions and risk of attack when on the territory of the opposite community. Two incidents reported resulted in the loss of life, injury, property damage and ensuing inter-communal violence in Rusayris and Wad Al Mahi. The restrictions and associated risks also impede access to basic services like education, health, water and markets in these two locations.
- In mid-January, a meeting with the Hamaj community in Village 6 in Wad Al Mahi and a SAF official on the return of the displaced Hausa led to a clash with casualties and ensuing tensions. Although calm was restored, this incident points to the fluidity of the security situation in Wad Al Mahi and the risk of adding further complexity to the conflict dynamics.
- On 24 January, the Governor extended the state of emergency throughout Blue Nile State initially declared in October 2022 giving security forces full authority to intervene and stop the fighting between the two communities and to restore law and order. This has contributed to impediments and delays in movement permits for humanitarian agencies hindering access to conflict-affected locations and response to humanitarian needs of IDPs and affected communities.
- In mid-February, Blue Nile authorities unilaterally returned an estimated 16,000 IDPs from Al Gassam school and Abu El fayed Center in Damazine to Village 8 in Geisan locality. Advocacy with authorities is ongoing on safeguards in return process, community involvement and coordination with humanitarian agencies.

White Nile State

- The situation of the IDPs who fled the Blue Nile conflict and are currently settling in Khor Ajwal remains challenging due to significant response gaps across all sectors, including risks for persons with specific needs, identified through UNHCR's enrollment exercise, a critical protection intervention, to inform the multi-sectoral response. The insecure land tenure of the site, however, inhibits needed support and planning. The uncertainty is daunting for the displaced, many of whom do not view return a viable option in the near future. The insecure tenure combined with the lack of an alternative could lead to a risk of forced return, which would expose people to significant harm and could fuel fresh conflict in Blue Nile.
- GBV risks due to the poor lighting are also prevalent, while children are particularly at risk to accidents due to the site's proximity to the highway, already translating in three accidents with one child killed and two injured. Medicine scarcity, including for children, also due to the lack of a medicine storage facility in the site, and the lack of a general food distribution, driving up child labour risks, remain key gaps that need urgent addressing.

Protection Response Updates

Child Protection

- The Child Protection Area of Responsibility of the Sector (CP AoR) currently concluded the survey on 2022 Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring to identify best practices, constraints and actions points. This process aims at informing the AoR's Action Plan on priorities.
- As a part of localization agenda, the CP AoR launched a self-assessment on the partner capacity on the five pillars of localization (governance, participation and influence, partnerships, capacity and funding), to inform a localization consensus workshop and ensuing action plan.
- The CP AoR is updating the user mapping list for PRIMERO CPIMS+ Go Live among the main agencies providing case management services for children, to be followed by training.
- The CP AoR has initiated the monthly reporting of 5ws for the year 2023 with the aim to track timely and qualitative response monitoring data.
- The CP AoR visited Blue Nile state in February to strengthen the sub-national coordination mechanism, including through 5w training for child protection partners to enhance the quality of reporting. During the field visit to Shamar where IDPs are hosted, community leaders and social workers identified the lack of documentation inhibiting access to medical services, lack of schools for IDP children and need for supplies for the child friendly space as key concerns.
- The CP AoR reactivated the Child Protection Working Group at Kassala and conducted a supportive field mission in February. The CP AoR is currently updating community-based child protection network, service mapping and mapping of existing child friendly spaces.
- In Khor Ajwal IDP site in White Nile, child protection activities benefit some 4,000 children (1800 boys and 2200 girls), including 22 children with disabilities (9 boys 13 girls). UNICEF is establishing a child friendly space and handed over newly established waterpoints. Support for teachers' incentives remains a need in Khor Ajwal. UNICEF is to set up Accelerated Learning Program Centers for the 643 out of school children (267 boys and 376 girls).

Gender-based violence

- Specialized GBV services, such as the clinical management of rape (CMR), psychosocial support, legal aid, case management, and referral mechanisms are unavailable in over 61 per cent of localities in Sudan. This gap in services is further exacerbated by funding shortages as well as the high turnover of trained personnel.
- In White Nile, 850 women and girls of IDP and host communities received dignity kits and sanitary pads, 250 of them are women with disabilities. The distribution was supported by UNFPA in partnership with CVAW, SAP and State Council for People with Special Needs. In Blue Nile, UNFPA and partners distributed 1,500 dignity kits in the Kormok and Damazine localities. In West Darfur, UNFPA, CDF and partners distributed 4,000 such kits based on vulnerability criteria.
 - To strengthen survivor-centered case management, the GBV Sub-Sector with UNFPA, CDF and partners, conducted a training in Case Management of 25 case workers in West Darfur. In addition, new income generation equipment was provided to support the Women and Girls Safe spaces in El Geneina, West Darfur, where consultations with key GBV responders were held to discuss GBV response gaps and challenges in the state. UNFPA also conducted a training on PSEA protocols/guidelines for a prompt, and safe response for 40 GBV Case Workers, Social Workers, Psychologists, and Medical Doctors in El Geneina, West Darfur.
 - In Central Darfur state, the GBV response for survivors remained ongoing, including support for medical treatment, case management and psycho-social support (PSS) for all localities. About 60 women and girls are received PSS, dignity kits. Income generating activities to start small business supported 63 women and girls in Wadi Saleh, 21 in Aldabbah village, 21 in Umkhir village 21 in Unjikyot village.

Housing, land and property & civil documentation

Housing, land and property (HLP) is key to the humanitarian response and is foundational to the HDP nexus. HLP needs critical strengthening as part of the humanitarian response given its importance for a multitude of other sectors. Similarly, legal identity and civil documentation is critical to the entire response and requires particular attention due to the broad range of negative implications of lack or loss of documentation.

In North Darfur (Al-Fasher and Kutum localities) and West Darfur (Geneina and Kreinik localities) states:

- 3,920 (2848F; 1072M) individuals received information on accessing legal identity and civil documentation. Of those, 2332 (67% female) individuals received legal assistance support to obtain vital documents, including national numbers, birth and marriage certificates.
- In collaboration with the judiciary, 19 mazoons received capacity building support, in an effort to increase the number of mazoons in rural areas authorized to issue marriage registration at the communal level.
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the civil registry, capacity building was provided for 39 midwives. The aim is to link registered midwives with civil registries to enable them to issue birth notifications for births they support particularly in rural areas with limited access to health facilities.
- 164 dispute resolution actors comprising of Omdas and Sheiks received training on collaborative dispute resolution (CDR) methods. Material support was provided to CDR leadership structures in Abushouk, Alsalam and Zamzam in Al-Fasher locality, North Darfur.
- In counselling sessions conducted in North Darfur, El-Fasher locality, the main HLP issues identified by beneficiaries include lack of housing or inadequate housing and rental support required. In West Darfur, the main issues raised include loss of HLP assets, multiple claims over land ownership, lack of housing, secondary occupation, eviction, deprivation of property without compensation and request for land registration. A total of 146 cases (71F; 75M) were received during this period.

Mine Action

- In Blue Nile state a total area of 165,279 m² of land previously contaminated or suspected to be contaminated with explosive ordnance has been released for local communities and affected populations. A total of 419 items have been destroyed in Blue Nile state including 2 anti-personnel mines, 27 antitank mines, 357 unexploded ordnance and 33 small arms ammunitions.
- In South Kordofan state a total of 7,654 people including boys, girls, men and women received EORE to enhance their awareness about the explosives hazard's risks in their areas.
- On 29 January 2023, a child boy was injured in Zalingei in Central Darfur state, as a result of an ERW accident.
- In preparation for the 2023 – 2024 operations, the Mine Action program in Sudan has announced a request for proposals to conduct land release operations. The bidding processes for Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and Victim Assistance (VA) interventions are under discussion.
- UNMAS in coordination with the National Mine Action Center (NMAC) under the co-chairmanship of the Ambassador of Italy and the SRSG is preparing the local Mine Action Support Group (MASG) meeting on 14 March. The MASG meeting is an annual mine action meeting that UNMAS Sudan convenes to sensitize donors and stakeholders on mine action.
- The NMAC in coordination with UNMAS is preparing to commemorate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April, pursuant to the respective declaration by the General Assembly of 8 December 2005. The Mine Action programme in Sudan is annually celebrating 4 April to raise awareness about mine action among the impacted populations and mine action stakeholders.