

Sudan: Update and practitioners exchange

Expert meeting Sudan | 28 August 2023 | The Hague

Sudan's ongoing conflict, entering its fifth month, continues to impose a profoundly destructive impact on its citizens. Yet, there is no resolution on the horizon. Instead, there is a daily intensification of hostilities, and the extreme brutality involved remains largely concealed from the international community. On August 28, 2023, KUNO assembled a panel of experts to participate in the meeting "Humanitarian situation and response in Sudan".

The main objective of the meeting was to facilitate a constructive dialogue between practitioners actively engaged in the Sudanese context, allowing them to share their perspectives on the challenges and potential opportunities for delivering humanitarian aid and alleviating suffering. Participants in this practitioners' exchange were well-informed specialists from international NGOs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, knowledge institutes and diaspora organisations. The meeting took place under Chatham House Rule, so this report only reflects some main findings and considerations.

Introductions were presented by:

- **Anette Hoffmann**, Senior Research Fellow, Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute.
- **Tinomuzivashi Zhou**, Plan International Sudan, Disaster Risk Management Program Manager.
- **Marie Smit**, Second Secretary, Development & Humanitarian Affairs, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Sudan, Eritrea & Chad.
- **Saad Abdulmahmoud**, engaged with several humanitarian initiatives of Sudanese diaspora organisations.
- **Leon Willems**, Senior Advisor, Free Press Unlimited.

This report summarises the main findings of the introductions and the subsequent discussion.

A mismatch between the scale of the crisis and the response

Participants highlighted the importance of addressing the crisis not just at the humanitarian level, but also seeing and tackling it as a larger political issue and reinforcing political pressure at the highest political level. They also highlighted challenges around conflict sensitivity, humanitarian diplomacy, and the lack of international awareness. A great urgency was expressed to shed light on the suffering and the pressing need for emergency relief.

The international response to the crises is slow, indecisive and inadequate. It does not match the urgency of the situation. This is certainly the case in Sudan. The lack of attention in the Dutch mainstream media and the political arena explains and reinforces the mismatch between the scale of Sudan's crisis and the West's response. Nevertheless, there are major causes for concern, due to extensive human rights abuses, the looming threat of a severe food crisis, as well as the huge number of displacements.

Ways Forward

Multiple experts (both from policy and practice) emphasised the importance of delivering effective aid while addressing challenges to prevent misuse of resources and engaging local partners to directly reach beneficiaries.

Overall the discussions touched upon the challenges of raising awareness about the ongoing conflict, the role of international actors, the urgency of addressing humanitarian needs, and the potential for grassroots and local efforts to make a difference. One conclusion was that the situation is complex and clearly needs more discussion. However, the following issues for follow-up were highlighted:

- **Role of Local Actors:**
 - Local voluntary groups and partners will be essential in aid delivery, transferring money and distributing supplies: how to deal with donors' concern that humanitarian support ends up with armed groups?
 - Security concerns of local partners need to be addressed.
 - Utilisation of Swift and Swap mechanisms within Sudan's private sector.
 - Emphasis on practical and direct aid to beneficiaries, shifting focus to individuals and utilising cash transfers.
- **Diaspora Involvement:**
 - Diaspora networks, including the many activists and Resistance Committee members who fled to neighbouring countries, provide an opportunity to channel aid discreetly and efficiently.
- **Commitment to Innovative Funding:**
 - Demand for innovative funding solutions to deliver effective and locally-driven humanitarian aid.
 - A UN waiver allows the use of alternative transfer modalities.
- **High-Level Pressure at a Political Level:**
 - The international community must step up its efforts to support peace negotiations.
 - Need for an urgent call for joint action to prioritise Sudan's political situation on the global agenda.
- **Challenges in the humanitarian response:**
 - Stressing the need to look forward to what is happening to prepare for rapid response to impending humanitarian crises, such as a polio outbreak and severe malnutrition.
 - Communication remains a challenge.
 - The need to monitor that money/supplies do not end up with armed groups and are used in effective ways.

Some further reading:

- [Call to action to US, EU and others](#), 29 June 2023, by Free Press Unlimited and others
- [To stop the war in Sudan, bankrupt the warlords](#), 03 May 2023, Clingendael Spectator
- [War in Sudan: Civilian forces at the heart of any solution](#), 03 May 2023, Clingendael Spectator
- [Policy brief – The Wests Struggle in Sudan](#), July 2022, Clingendael (English)

- [Policy_brief - The Wests Struggle in Sudan \(Arabic\)](#), July 2022, Clingendael (Arabic)