



SUDAN COUNTRY BRIEF

THE STATE OF THE
HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM 2026



5. IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING AND PRACTICE

The crisis in Sudan teaches us not that the formal humanitarian system is absent, but that its ability to translate plans into coverage is structurally constrained. Consequently, the response depends on locally rooted, politically exposed and often unpaid delivery capacity.

What does this mean for the humanitarian system in terms of architecture, financing, risk, protection and accountability in conflict settings where the centre cannot reliably reach the margins?

- **Plan for a dual system, not a single humanitarian system:** In Sudan, the formal architecture and the locally embedded response operate in parallel, with uneven connection between them. Humanitarian practice should work with this reality rather than treat informal delivery as a stopgap until the formal system returns.
- **Reframe localisation from policy ambition to operational necessity:** Locally embedded actors are not just partners, they are the delivery layer in many areas because they can operate where others cannot. In localisation debates, this moves capacity narratives to discussions of what the system relies on in practice, including who carries risk and who gets predictable support.
- **Treat access as a structural feature that shapes strategy, not an implementation constraint:** Access conditions in Sudan do not simply slow delivery, they determine feasible models of aid, who can move, what can be monitored and what can be said. This implies a shift from designing programmes around needs alone to designing around the intersection of needs, permissions, safety and the likelihood of interruption.
- **Make risk distribution explicit and link it to duty of care:** A consistent pattern is the transfer of delivery risk to local volunteers, intermediaries and vendors as international staff are withdrawn or manage responses remotely. Risk becomes a governance issue and a security issue, requiring shared decisions about acceptable risk and stronger protections for those carrying that risk.



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- **Recognise diaspora finance within crisis architecture:** Diaspora support functions as a parallel financing layer that can move quickly and directly, but this support is uneven, volatile and constrained by liquidity and platform disruption. The implication is that diaspora remittances are not a broadly available coping mechanism. Humanitarian financing and cash strategies need to be designed to reduce inequity for households that lack access to these networks.
- **Treat protection as a test of continuity, safe access and freedom to operate, not just service availability:** Protection performance depends on sustained presence, confidentiality and political room to operate. When these conditions shrink, protection becomes more visible but less reliably actionable. People are more aware of protection services and reporting, but inconsistent programming, stigma and privacy constraints limit what can be assessed or disclosed.
- **Revisit what 'coordination success' means when a country is fragmented:** When frontlines and permissions fracture the operating environment, central coordination can remain active but coverage becomes inconsistent. Here, coordination mechanisms that solve operational problems across conflict zones and enable area-based decision-making are valuable. Coordination quality does not always equate with the existence of structures and meetings.

