



SUDAN COUNTRY BRIEF

THE STATE OF THE
HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan has brought about a fundamental reconfiguration of the response landscape, creating a system that is fragmented and functioning under extreme pressure. As the formal international architecture strains under severe funding cuts and shifts in donor attention, a diverse ecosystem of actors has emerged to fill the void. This includes local youth-led groups and Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), diaspora networks and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who often act as the primary lifeline in hard-to-reach and besieged areas where international access is denied.

This research brief forms part of the wider research for the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action's (ALNAP) sixth [State of the Humanitarian System \(SOHS\) report](#). It examines three distinct aspects that are shaping how aid is organised and experienced in Sudan:

1. How do ERRs and diaspora networks function as the backbone of a response alongside formal structures in a fragmented system?
2. How are actors adapting operations to navigate severe conflict, governance and access constraints?
3. How is the protection sector evolving amid growing visibility but extreme political and financial fragility?

This brief serves as a tool for reflection and dialogue on how this complex system is performing in practice. It draws on qualitative data collected from key informant interviews and focus group discussions with diverse stakeholders and displaced people across Kassala, Gedaref, North Kordofan, Northern State and East Darfur. Interviews were conducted in-person and remotely between June 2025 and November 2025, during an active and highly fluid conflict environment characterised by shifting frontlines, repeated displacement and significant constraints on movement, communications and safe access. It also draws selectively on survey data collected between August and September 2025 from 1,000 aid



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recipients in Gedaref (n=337), Kassala (n=340) and Northern State (n=323), including a predominantly displaced sample, to triangulate some findings on aid adequacy, timeliness, consultation and recipient experience.

The three states were selected based on a rapid mapping of locations or 'hotspots' with high displacement rates using data from the Humanitarian Response Plan 2023–2024, supplemented by in-country verification of evolving

displacement patterns and operational developments as the conflict shifted. The selection also considered practical feasibility, including security and access constraints, connectivity for remote engagement, and the presence of a sufficiently diverse set of active responders and community stakeholders to support meaningful participation.

The intended audience of this brief spans the full spectrum of the humanitarian community. For local responders, national NGOs and mutual aid groups, this paper documents their pivotal role and the structural inequities that continue to limit their influence. For international actors and donors in particular, it provides insight into the 'humanitarian reset',¹ as the humanitarian system formalises a shift towards delivering assistance – to the extent possible – with the resources currently available through sharper prioritisation and efforts to streamline operations. This reset directly shapes what gets funded, where coverage contracts and which operational trade-offs become unavoidable.

The brief also provides insight into the operational choices made to navigate a politicised environment where neutrality is constantly contested. Ultimately, it positions Sudan not just as a crisis to be managed, but as a critical case study for understanding how the humanitarian system adapts, or struggles to adapt, to the changing nature of protracted conflict.



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¹ The humanitarian reset is the initiative launched by UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher and the IASC in March 2025 in response to a sector-wide funding shock and rising needs. It is a reform agenda to make delivery localised, faster, and more accountable.