



TTMUN'24

FORUM: UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY FUND

QUESTION OF: ENSURING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION RIGHTS AMIDST THE FIGHT IN SUDAN

INTRODUCTION

1 in every 3 children in Sudan (6.5 million children) lost access to school due to increased violence and insecurity in their region, with at least 10,400 schools shuttered in affected areas. Meanwhile, over 5.5 million children who are not impacted by the war are waiting for authorities to confirm whether classrooms can be reopened.

Even before the conflict erupted in April, nearly 7 million children were already out of school in a country with extreme poverty and instability. If the war continues, no child in Sudan will be able to go back to school in the coming months, leaving them exposed to immediate and long-term dangers, including displacement, recruitment by armed groups and sexual violence.

“Sudan is on the brink of becoming home to the worst education crisis in the world,” said Mandeep O’Brien, UNICEF Country Representative in Sudan. “Children have been exposed to the horrors of war for nearly half a year. Now, forced away from their classrooms, teachers, and friends, they are at risk of falling into a void that will threaten the future of an entire generation.”

Beyond reading, writing, and mathematics, children also learn social and emotional skills in school, which in a time of conflict can become a lifeline for coping with violence, loss, and trauma. Meanwhile, they can also access many other critical - and often life-saving - services, such as nutrition, healthcare, and psychosocial support.

“Since the conflict began, Sudan has emerged as the globe's most extensive internal displacement crisis, with 4.4 million people newly displaced within Sudan, including around 2.5 million children. Additionally, 5 million school-age children find themselves trapped in areas of active conflict, placing them in the highest jeopardy of losing crucial access to education and essential protection services,” said Arif Noor, Save the Children Sudan Country Director.



Spending on social services has been on a steep decline, with teachers in almost all states missing their salaries since the armed conflict started nearly six months ago. Education supplies are lacking, and facilities have not been maintained. While efforts are under way in a few regions to ensure education systems in Sudan remain functional, there are significant constraints, and the needs are quickly outpacing the resources.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Colonial Legacy:

The legacy of British colonization (1898-1956) is still felt in divisions between the Arab north and the African south, and in economic disparities.

North-South Conflict:

A decades-long civil war (1955-2005) between the Arab-dominated north and the Christian/animist south seeking autonomy, culminating in South Sudanese independence in 2011.

Secession of South Sudan:

The separation of South Sudan in 2011 created a new border and complex challenges related to oil resources, water rights, and citizenship.

2019 Revolution:

A popular uprising that toppled the authoritarian regime of Omar al-Bashir, leading to a transitional government with military participation.

Coup d'État in 2021:

A military takeover led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, disrupting the democratic transition and leading to international condemnation.



Economic and Environmental Terms:

- **Oil Dependency:** Sudan's economy heavily relies on oil revenues, making it vulnerable to price fluctuations and resource depletion.
- **Drought and Food Insecurity:** Frequent droughts and climate change lead to food shortages and malnutrition, particularly in marginalized areas.
- **Debt Burden:** Sudan's extensive foreign debt hinders economic development and limits access to international aid.
- **Land Degradation:** Unsustainable agricultural practices and climate change contribute to land degradation and reduced productivity.

International Relations and Aid:

- **UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS):** A United Nations peacekeeping mission deployed in 2011 to support South Sudan's independence and stability.
- **Troika:** Group of three countries (US, UK, Norway) playing a key role in mediating the Sudanese crisis and supporting the democratic transition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In April 2023, fighting between rival armed factions broke out in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, raising fears of a return to full-scale civil war. The conflict is primarily a power struggle between the leaders of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and a powerful paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The two groups are battling one another for control of the state.

For the first half of the twentieth century, Sudan was a joint protectorate of Egypt and the United Kingdom. Known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the arrangement granted the British primary political and military power. Egypt and the United Kingdom signed a treaty relinquishing sovereignty to the independent Republic of Sudan in 1956. The new republic immediately faced major challenges: it spanned nearly one million square miles and was situated directly between some of Africa's most violent states and regions. Even more concerning was the stark internal divide between the country's wealthier northern region,



which was majority Arab and Muslim, and its less-developed southern region, where most people were Christian or animist. This divide was at the center of two civil wars, the second of which would see the country split into two states in 2011. The second Sudanese civil war of 1983 to 2005 was brutal; famine and atrocity crimes were well-documented throughout the conflict, which ultimately killed an estimated two million people. In July 2011, Sudan's southern territory seceded and formed a new state: the Republic of South Sudan.

In addition to internal conflict, Sudan's post-colonial period was also marked by the dictatorship of Omar al-Bashir. Bashir seized power in a 1989 coup following his service in the Egyptian military during condominium rule and later served as an SAF officer. As president, Bashir oversaw most of the civil war, the secession of South Sudan, and the conflict in Darfur. The Darfur war broke out in 2003 and would later be condemned as a genocide against non-Arab populations such as the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit peoples in western Sudan by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the U.S. State Department. Bashir's regime was considered oppressive: he imposed a restrictive interpretation of sharia, employed private militias to fight his battles and morality police to enforce his decrees; and persecuted Christianity, Sunni apostasy, Shiism, and other minority religious activity. The regime survived until 2019; Omar al-Bashir was president of Sudan for thirty years. By the final decade of his presidency, Bashir was facing increasing popular protests calling for democracy, access to basic services, and a new system of governance. The revolution culminated in an April 2019 coup, which was carried out jointly by the SAF –under the leadership of General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan– and the RSF, a militia led by Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo.

The RSF is the most powerful paramilitary group to come out of the Bashir era. The RSF was created from the Janjaweed militia, an Arab-majority armed group funded by Bashir to repress southern Sudanese rebels and, most notably, to fight in the Darfur War. The group carried out brutal attacks across the Darfur region and is responsible for mass displacement, sexual violence, kidnapping, and other crimes. The first two years of the conflict in Darfur claimed over two hundred thousand lives, and over one hundred thousand more have died since 2005. The loosely coordinated Janjaweed was formally organized under the banner of the RSF in 2013 with Bashir's support and has since been employed as a border guard force, a source of mercenaries for the Saudi coalition in the Yemeni war, and a hired security force to repress popular uprisings. RSF leader Hemedti became one of Sudan's wealthiest men by



seizing control of gold mines, with the Bashir government's blessing, during the RSF's campaigns. Prior to 2019, Bashir hired the RSF to protect him from coups and attempts on his life. Despite this, the RSF ultimately participated in the 2019 coup to oust Bashir and worked alongside the SAF to establish a transitional government and a new constitution in its aftermath. Burhan led the Transitional Sovereignty Council with Hemedti as his deputy. The council also included other military leaders and several civilians.

Among the civilian members, the council members chose Abdalla Hamdok, an economist and development expert with experience at various multilateral organizations, to be prime minister. He spent his brief time in office attempting to mitigate Sudan's extreme economic turmoil and project stability to the outside world but was arrested and removed from office in October 2021. The SAF and RSF orchestrated the coup against Hamdok and suspended the constitution. In response, international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund paused badly needed debt and other relief to Sudan, and mass demonstrations demanding a return to civilian control intensified in Khartoum. Hamdok was briefly reinstated as prime minister in November 2021 once he agreed to concede certain governing powers to Burhan, Hemedti, and the rest of the security sector. Hamdok finally resigned in January 2022 when it became clear that Sudan's protestors were not satisfied with the terms of his reinstatement and that he could not control the violent actions of the security forces, who had repeatedly beaten and killed protestors. Since Hamdok's resignation, Sudan has had no effective civilian leadership; Burhan operates as de facto head of state. By early 2022, Burhan and Hemedti were left at the helm of the government, with the power to direct its democratic transition.

Negotiations throughout 2022 over the future of Sudanese governance culminated in a December 2022 deal laying the groundwork for a two-year transition to civilian leadership and national elections. In addition to the contested time frame, many citizens rejected the plan for allowing the security sector to retain some state powers post-transition and for excluding the specific demands of the leaders of popular protests and other opposition groups to hold Burhan, Hemedti, and other security sector figures accountable. Unrest broke out again and persisted from December into the spring, leading to more violent crackdowns on protests. As the transitional government, still led by Burhan, began to negotiate the implementation of the plan, major sticking points began to emerge. Foremost was the role of Hemedti and the RSF; the agreement elevated Hemedti to Burhan's equal, making him no longer the general's



deputy. The deal also called for the eventual integration of the RSF into Sudan's legitimate armed forces and placed both the SAF and the RSF under civilian leadership. One of the deal's weaknesses was that it did not specify a deadline for the RSF's integration into the SAF (Burhan insisted upon a two-year process, while Hemedti proposed a ten-year timeline). The two leaders missed an early 2023 deadline to determine conditions for the agreement's implementation, indicating tension over the RSF's role, its relationship with the SAF, and the future of both forces as subordinates of an elected government.

As the months passed, the power struggle between Burhan's SAF and Hemedti's RSF continued to stall the country's transition efforts. By early April, SAF troops lined the streets of Khartoum, and RSF soldiers were deployed throughout Sudan. On April 15, a series of explosions shook Khartoum, along with heavy gunfire. SAF and RSF leadership both accused the other of firing first. The involvement of the Wagner Group and foreign military influence, notably from the United Arab Emirates, risk deepening the rivalry at the core of Sudan's crisis.

CURRENT SITUATION

Currently, Over 7 million people, including 4.5 million since April 2023, are internally displaced within Sudan. An additional 1.2 million have fled to neighbouring countries. This mass displacement disrupts education for countless children, particularly in conflict-affected areas in Sudan. Over 10,400 schools were forced to close due to the conflict, leaving 6.4 million children without access to education. This represents a massive gap in learning opportunities and threatens long-term educational continuity. Disparities in access and quality education persist, with girls, internally displaced persons (IDPs), children in rural areas, and those from poor households facing the brunt of the disadvantage. Conflict and insecurity also contribute to teacher shortages, further hindering the provision of quality education. The situation in Sudan is constantly evolving and people are seeking help.



MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED:

UNESCO

UNESCO works with the Sudanese government and education stakeholders to advocate for education as a fundamental human right and a vital tool for peacebuilding and sustainable development. This includes promoting policies that prioritize access to quality education for all, especially in conflict-affected areas. During active conflict, UNESCO provides emergency education to displaced children and youth through temporary learning spaces and alternative programs. They also support the rehabilitation of damaged schools and the provision of learning materials. UNESCO focuses on providing teachers with the skills and resources they need to teach in challenging environments and address the psychosocial needs of students affected by conflict. They also offer training in peacebuilding and conflict resolution to promote tolerance and understanding in the classroom. UNESCO conducts research on the impact of the conflict on education and shares the best practices for rebuilding education systems in post-conflict settings. They also promote education as a means of preventing future conflict through interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange programs.

UNICEF

UNICEF prioritizes protecting children from violence and exploitation during conflict, including ensuring their access to safe and secure learning environments. They also provide psychological support to children traumatized by war and help them reintegrate into schools and communities. Similar to UNESCO, UNICEF sets up temporary learning spaces and provides learning materials in displacement camps and conflict-affected areas. They also offer accelerated learning programs to help children catch up on their education if they have missed school due to conflict. UNICEF advocates for increased international funding for education in Sudan, particularly in conflict-affected areas. They also work to ensure that education budgets are effectively used to reach the most vulnerable children. UNICEF works with communities to rebuild their own education systems and promote local ownership of education initiatives. This includes training community leaders and parents in supporting children's education and advocating for their rights.



SUDAN

The Sudanese Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and implementing education policies across the country. They are working to rebuild the education system after years of conflict and displacement, prioritizing access to quality education for all children. Local and regional governments play a crucial role in managing schools, recruiting and training teachers, and providing resources for education. They are also responsible for ensuring that education policies are implemented effectively in their areas. Numerous Sudanese civil society organizations work on education issues, including providing support to schools in conflict-affected areas, advocating for education rights, and offering alternative learning programs for children who are out of school.

RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS:

[Resolution A/78/L.4](#) - Strengthening education in times of armed conflict and emergency situations (adopted December 6, 2023)

[Resolution A/73/242](#) - The right to education in situations of armed conflict (adopted December 20, 2018)

[Resolution A/72/215](#) - Education for peace, stability and sustainable development (adopted December 20, 2017):

SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES

Local communities play a crucial role in reopening schools, mobilising teachers, and advocating for safe learning environments.

Human rights groups and education advocates continue to raise awareness about the importance of education in conflict situations and urge for increased funding and support.

- **Long-term Solutions:** Rebuilding education infrastructure, training teachers, and providing psychosocial support for children affected by conflict are crucial long-term goals.



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- **Peacebuilding:** Achieving sustainable peace remains essential for ensuring long-term access to education for all Sudanese children.
- **Community Engagement:** Actively involving local communities, parents, and children themselves in developing culturally appropriate and effective education interventions is key to success.

USEFUL LINKS:

<https://www.unicef.org/sudan/press-releases/19-million-children-sudan-out-school-conflict-rages-unicef-save-children>

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/power-struggle-sudan>

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/whats-behind-fighting-sudan>

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