



21 September 2023 – Five months of war in Sudan have had a deadly impact on the lives, livelihoods and health of the people. A health system that was already weak and struggling due to conflict, disease outbreaks and hunger is buckling under the immense pressure of the war. Health is under threat in the face of mass displacement, injuries, hunger, floods and disease outbreaks. Even more so in a context of attacks on health care, scarce medical supplies and equipment, and lack of health workers and cash.

WHO has verified 56 attacks on health care, resulting in 11 deaths and 38 injuries, since the war began. The Organization is concerned that 26 of these attacks took place after the signing, on 11 May 2023, of the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan. Attacks on health care are a violation of international humanitarian law and must stop.

About 70% of hospitals in conflict-affected states are nonfunctional as a result of these attacks combined with the insecurity, shortage of medical supplies, and lack of cash to meet operational costs and salaries. Functioning hospitals and clinics in non-conflict-affected states are overwhelmed by the influx of internally displaced people. Health workers in Sudan are saving lives while their own lives are at high risk.

The war has displaced 5.2 million people – 4.1 million within Sudan and 1.1 million into neighbouring countries. As a result, the health systems of Sudan and the 6 countries hosting its refugees are stretched to capacity. Overcrowding, shortages of food and water, lack of sanitation and poor hygiene in camps put the displaced at high risk of malnutrition and disease outbreaks. Children in these camps are already dying from malnutrition and vaccine-preventable diseases, like measles and rubella.

Some 24.7 million people – half the population of Sudan – need humanitarian assistance. Of this number, 20.3 million face high acute food insecurity. In children, hunger plus disease outbreaks can lead to serious illness and even death. Sudan is faced with this deadly combination, with 3.4 million children aged under 5 years acutely malnourished and ongoing disease outbreaks – including measles, rubella, acute watery diarrhoea/suspected cholera, malaria and dengue.

Unfettered access and ongoing donor support are vital

WHO is responding to the health needs of the people of Sudan and coordinating the emergency health response. WHO teams in Sudan are working closely with government counterparts and health partners to distribute urgently needed medicines and medical supplies. They are also providing expert advice, training and oversight to health operations, disease surveillance and outbreak response.

Yet insecurity and operational hurdles continue to pose challenges to the timely delivery of supplies and services to their intended destinations. WHO requires safe and unfettered access to all areas of Sudan.

Shortage of funding also limits WHO's ability to plan ahead and implement a robust response to reverse the trajectory of the health crisis. WHO thanks all its donors for standing in solidarity with the Organization, as the Organization stands with the people of Sudan. The continuous commitment and support of donors is essential for WHO to continue delivering life-saving work on the ground. This work is vital to both sustain and rehabilitate the country's health system through the current shock and to strengthen it to meet the ever-mounting needs of Sudan's people.

Now is the time to act for Sudan. Delayed action will cost the country more lives lost, more families broken and more communities irreparably altered.

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