CRISIS IN SUDAN

Armed conflict has once again forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes. Oxfam is working closely with communities and local partners to protect lives and build a better future.

RECENT HISTORY

In early 2003, armed groups from Sudan’s western region of Darfur launched a rebellion, claiming that Darfur had suffered decades of political marginalization and economic neglect at the hands of successive national governments in Khartoum. The counterinsurgency was fierce: air strikes and armed militias damaged and destroyed thousands of villages considered sympathetic to the rebels. The Darfur conflict reached its height in 2003 and 2004, but a decade later, violence continues to trigger mass displacement in the region.

The year 2011 was pivotal in Sudan’s history: the southern region of the country voted to break off from the north and become the independent nation of South Sudan. The move brought some closure to a decades-long conflict between north and south, but border states left in limbo by the agreement soon erupted in violence. Armed conflict between the government and rebel groups in South Kordofan and Blue Nile has left untold numbers of civilians living in desperate conditions with no access to safe havens, medical care, or humanitarian aid.

AN UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE

In 2013 and the first half of 2014, new waves of violence sent nearly 900,000 people in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile fleeing for their lives. Many left home with little more than the clothes on their backs and have been unable to return to their villages because they are no longer safe or habitable. Those who were able to make it to camps for safety joined families who have lived in these crowded settlements for more than a decade.

// People who have had to abandon their villages have lost so much—their belongings, their communities, their livelihoods, and in some cases the people they loved the most—but they are committed to getting back on their feet. //

—El Fateh Osman, director of Oxfam in Sudan

ABOVE: A woman stands near the makeshift camp in South Darfur she must now call home. “We heard shooting everywhere,” said a neighbor, describing the flight from her village. “We didn’t collect anything from the house. We just started to run, to run.” In the first half of 2014, violence displaced more than 500,000 people in Sudan.

Sahar Ali / Oxfam
WHAT OXFAM IS DOING
In recent years we have provided more than 300,000 people with assistance such as:

• Clean water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene promotion
• Fuel-efficient stoves to reduce poverty, environmental damage, and risks to women and girls
• Agricultural support like seeds, tools, and extension services
• Tree saplings to provide shade and fruit, and to restore wildlife habitat
• Support for widowed and disabled parents to start small businesses

When the new violence broke out, we rushed aid to newly displaced communities in Darfur and South Kordofan. In both North and South Darfur, we have provided clean water, constructed latrines, and distributed essential items such as plastic sheeting for shelter, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, sanitary supplies for women, and hygiene materials like soap to prevent outbreaks of disease. Partners in South Kordofan have distributed relief supplies and are providing public health interventions—water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion—in areas that they are able to access.

BUILDING ON LOCAL RESOURCES
Oxfam and our partners will continue to respond to conflict-related emergencies, with the goals of saving lives, protecting public health, and easing the suffering and indignities of forced displacement. But—with an eye to strengthening communities and boosting sustainability—we are actively transferring knowledge and resources to partners and communities to enable them to do this work with minimal outside assistance. For example, in the conflict-affected Darfur town of Kebkabiya, where an Oxfam partner has provided water and sanitation to displaced people for many years, we have a new approach: help the partner improve the water infrastructure and train community teams to operate the system themselves.

A MEASURE OF SECURITY
All over the world, poverty puts people in harm’s way. In Sudan, women and girls who can’t afford to buy their fuel in the market must make dangerous journeys to the countryside where they face the risk of assault and injury. Young men who have no way to earn a living may be lured into banditry. And farmers and pastoralists, though their occupations complement each other naturally, may be drawn into conflict if they feel their livelihoods are at risk. Oxfam’s programs will increasingly focus on helping economically vulnerable groups become more secure. We will train farmers and herders in improved agricultural techniques, introduce the Saving for Change microfinance system to women and others who lack access to credit, provide vocational training to the jobless, and launch market-based interventions to help small-scale traders and producers succeed.

Armed violence is an ever-present danger, but we will work toward peace and security at the grass roots, helping those who have been divided by war and politics work together to create safer, stronger communities.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?
The Sudan crises have been eclipsed by other emergencies around the world, and funding has fallen far short of the needs. Donate now at oxfamamerica.org/donatesudan.