

ERD Organization

South Kordofan's Dire Humanitarian Crisis: A Critical NFI Assessment Amidst Escalating Conflict

Unpacking the Urgent Need for Non-Food Items as Displacement and Famine Loom in Sudan's Conflict-Ridden Region

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Key Insights into South Kordofan's Humanitarian Landscape

- **Acute NFI Gaps:** South Kordofan faces an alarming 89% gap in emergency shelter and Non-Food Item (NFI) support, signifying a critical need for essential supplies like blankets, sleeping mats, and tarpaulins.
- **Conflict-Driven Displacement:** Escalating violence and siege conditions, particularly in areas like Kadugli and Dilling, have led to significant internal displacement and severe shortages of basic necessities, pushing populations towards famine-like conditions.
- **Access Constraints:** Ongoing hostilities, blocked road corridors, and insecurity severely impede humanitarian aid delivery, making it challenging to reach vulnerable populations with life-saving NFIs and other essential services.

South Kordofan, a region deeply scarred by protracted conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), is experiencing a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis. The escalating violence has led to widespread displacement, severe food insecurity, and critical shortages of essential Non-Food Items (NFIs). This report synthesizes recent assessments to provide a comprehensive overview of the NFI needs in South Kordofan, emphasizing the urgency of coordinated humanitarian action.

The Deepening Humanitarian Crisis in South Kordofan

The humanitarian situation in South Kordofan has reached a critical juncture, characterized by ongoing hostilities that have displaced thousands and exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities. Areas like Kadugli, Dilling, and El Abassiya have seen significant population movements, with many civilians trapped in siege-like conditions, cut off from vital assistance.

Escalating Conflict and Displacement

Since December 2025, intensified fighting has led to the displacement of over 23,000 people from key areas. The Rapid Support Forces' advances into Kordofan have resulted in the seizure of SAF positions, triggering mass displacement. This has created a complex and perilous environment for civilians, particularly women, children, and the elderly, who are exposed to violence, exploitation, and severe health risks. The humanitarian community has condemned the violence, with reports of aerial strikes and atrocities further exacerbating the crisis.

The consequences of this conflict are dire, leading to severe shortages of basic necessities and the collapse of essential services. Families are forced to seek refuge in informal shelters, often constructed from rudimentary materials like plastic sheets, offering minimal protection against harsh weather conditions.



People fleeing conflict in South Kordofan, seeking safety and shelter.

Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition

The conflict has severely disrupted trade routes and limited supplies, particularly from South Sudan, leading to rampant inflation and reduced agricultural cultivation. This has plunged many areas, including Dilling and Kadugli, into severe food insecurity, with populations facing Famine (IPC Phase 5) conditions. Malnutrition cases have surged dramatically, with a reported 130% increase in West Kordofan, including tragic deaths among children and the elderly due to starvation. While food is a primary concern, the lack of NFIs directly impacts safe cooking and food preparation, exacerbating health risks.

Critical Needs in Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Multi-sectoral assessments, including those from IOM and OCHA, consistently highlight severe gaps in NFIs across South Kordofan. These items are crucial for the survival, dignity, and protection of displaced populations and host communities.

Shelter and Household Items: A Pervasive Gap

The most pressing NFI need is for adequate shelter and household items. South Kordofan faces an estimated 89% gap in emergency shelter and NFI support. Thousands of displaced individuals, including those in displacement sites like Kosti, lack proper coverings, relying on flimsy plastic sheets that offer little protection from the elements. The urgent requirement includes:

- **Tarpaulins:** An estimated 50,000+ tarpaulins are needed for approximately 20,000 households to provide basic shelter.
- **Sleeping Mats and Blankets:** Essential for warmth and comfort, especially as temperatures drop, contributing to protection against cold nights.
- **Kitchen Sets:** Limited access to cooking utensils and safe fuel sources poses significant health hazards, necessitating the distribution of complete kitchen sets.

Hygiene, Sanitation, and Protection

Beyond immediate shelter, hygiene and sanitation items are critically lacking, contributing to increased health risks, including cholera outbreaks. Vulnerable groups, particularly malnourished children and pregnant women, require specific support:

- **Soapand Buckets:** Fundamental for maintaining personal hygiene and preventing disease.

- **Menstrual Hygiene Products:** Essential for the dignity and health of women and girls.
- **Protection Items:** Privacy items like solar lanterns are crucial for enhancing safety and dignity,especiallyfor women and girls in displacement settings.

Winterization Needs

As colder seasons approach, the need for winterization items becomes increasingly urgent. Blankets and warm clothing are vital to protect vulnerable populations from harsh weather conditions, especially those living in makeshift shelters.

Humanitarian Response and Persistent Challenges

Despite the immense challenges, humanitarian organizations are striving to provide assistance. Joint UN convoys have delivered essential supplies, including core relief kits with blankets, sleeping mats, jerrycans, plastic tarpaulins, mosquito nets, and kitchen sets, to besieged towns like Dilling and Kadugli. Organizations like ERD are actively involved in distributing improved emergency shelters and NFI kits to vulnerable mobile populations.



Humanitarian aid distribution in a displacement camp in Sudan.

Access Constraints and Insecurity

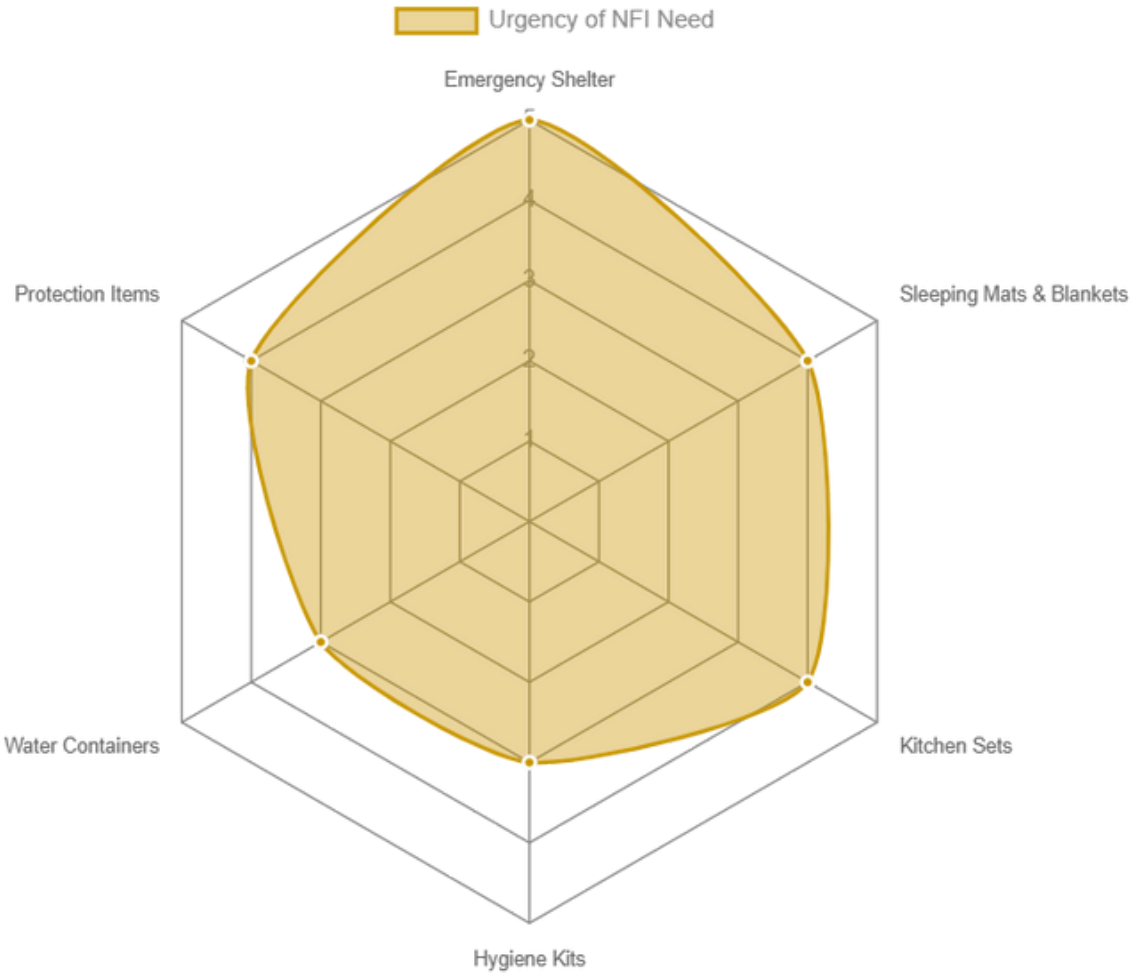
The primary impediment to effective humanitarian response is the severe restriction on access. Blocked and unsafe road corridors, coupled with ongoing insecurity and military activities, disrupt the movement of essential goods and personnel. Humanitarian access snapshots indicate that aid corridors are at constant risk, necessitating protective action and sustained diplomatic efforts to ensure unhindered passage for aid. This includes challenges in reaching SPLM-N controlled zones for assessments and distributions.

Funding Gaps and Operational Shortfalls

While global appeals like the UN's $23 billion plan allocate resources for NFI distribution, only an estimated 30% of the required volumes are currently being met in South Kordofan. The Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) allocated $25 million in 2025, extending into 2026, for NFI-focused aid, but this remains insufficient to address the scale of needs for the 500,000+ internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region.

Prioritized NFI Needs Assessment: A Visual Overview

To better visualize the scale and nature of NFI needs in South Kordofan, the following radar chart illustrates key areas of concern based on recent assessments. The chart uses a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 indicates the most critical need.



This radar chart underscores the critical need for emergency shelter, which is consistently ranked as the highest priority due to mass displacement and inadequate housing. Items like sleeping mats, blankets, kitchen sets, and protection items also show high urgency, reflecting their direct impact on the safety, health, and dignity of affected populations. Hygiene kits and water containers, while crucial, often fall slightly below immediate shelter needs in terms of absolute criticality in the current context.

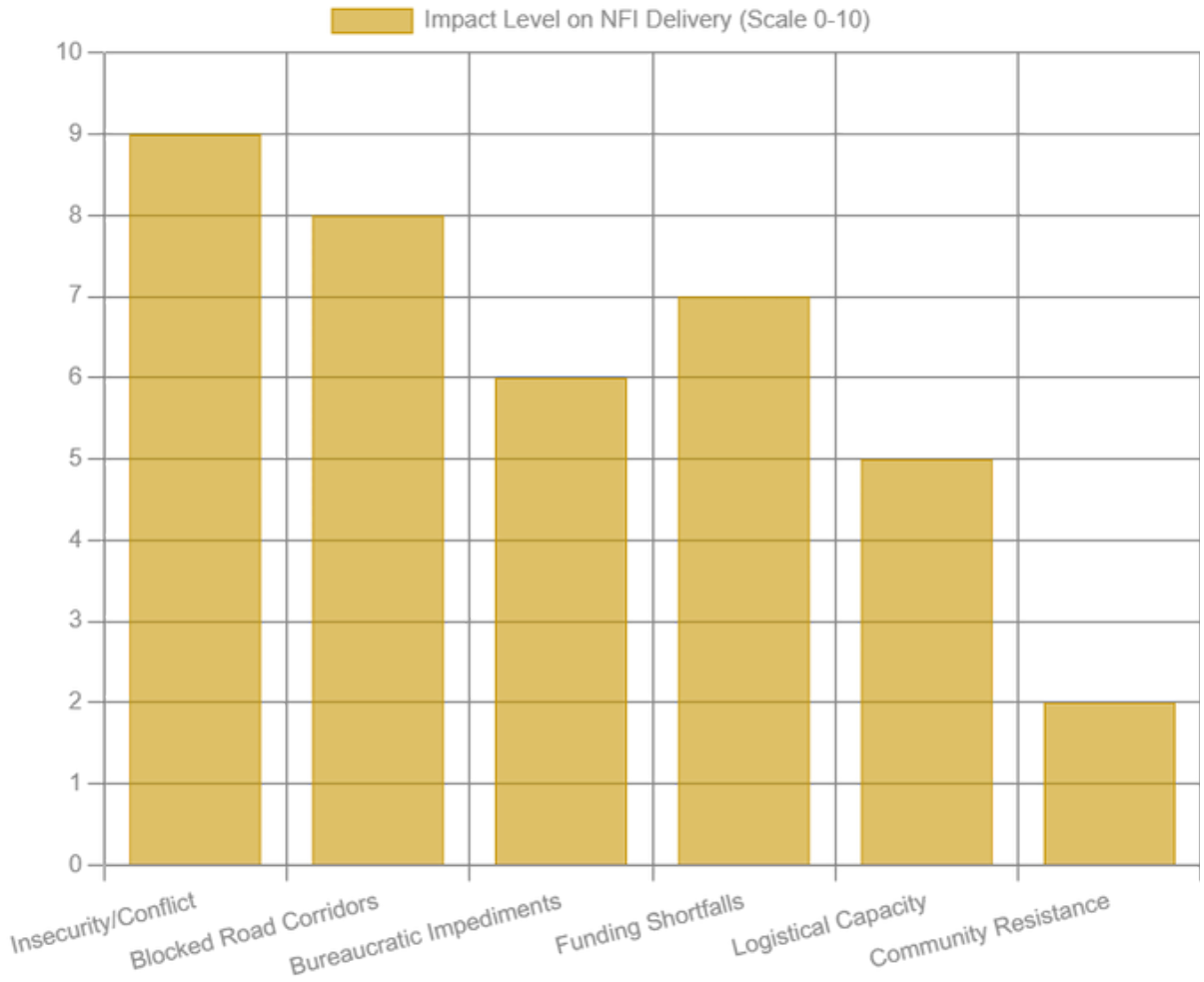
Interconnectedness of Humanitarian Needs: A Mind map

The humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan is complex, with various needs being interconnected. This mind map illustrates how NFI needs are inextricably linked to broader humanitarian concerns.

The mind map highlights that NFI needs, encompassing shelter, household items, hygiene, and protection, are a central component of the crisis. These are directly influenced by the ongoing conflict and displacement, which in turn exacerbate food insecurity and malnutrition. Furthermore, access constraints severely impede the delivery of all forms of aid, including NFIs, and contribute to the deterioration of health and WASH conditions.

Impact of Access Challenges on NFI Delivery

The ability to deliver essential NFIs to those in need is severely hampered by a multitude of access challenges. This bar chart illustrates the perceived impact level of various obstacles on NFI distribution.



This bar chart highlights that insecurity and conflict, closely followed by blocked road corridors, represent the most significant obstacles to NFI delivery. These factors directly

prevent humanitarian convoys from reaching affected populations. Funding shortfalls also pose a substantial challenge, limiting the quantity of aid available, while bureaucratic impediments and logistical capacity issues add further layers of complexity. Community resistance, while present in some contexts, is generally a lesser barrier compared to the overarching security and access issues.

Summary of Key NFI Requirements

The table below summarizes the critical NFI categories, their specific needs, and the rationale behind their prioritization in South Kordofan.

NFI Category	Specific Needs	Rationale for Prioritization
Emergency Shelter	Tarpaulins, shelter kits, ropes, tools	Protection from elements, privacy, security for displaced populations due to inadequate housing. Essential for basic living conditions, preventing disease, safe food preparation, and water storage. Preventing waterborne diseases, maintaining personal dignity, particularly for women and girls. Enhancing safety in displacement camps, particularly at night, providing warmth during cold seasons.
Household Items	Sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, jerrycans	
Hygiene & Sanitation	Soap, buckets, water purification tablets, menstrual hygiene products	
Protection & Dignity	Solar lanterns, dignity kits, warm clothing	

Bridging the Gaps: Recommendations and Way Forward

Addressing the NFI crisis in South Kordofan requires a multi-faceted approach, focusing on immediate relief, improved access, and coordinated interventions.

Immediate NFI Prepositioning and Distribution

There is an urgent need to preposition NFIs in safer, accessible areas like Talodi, Altadoum and Abugibiaha to facilitate rapid deployment once windows of access open. Community-led assessments, particularly in SPLM-N controlled zones, are crucial for tailoring distributions to specific needs. The ongoing efforts by humanitarian partners to deliver core relief kits through joint convoys must be scaled up and supported.

Advocacy for Unhindered Humanitarian Access

Sustained advocacy for unhindered humanitarian corridors is paramount. All parties to the conflict must respect international humanitarian law and ensure safe passage for aid workers and supplies. Diplomatic efforts are critical to negotiate access and protect civilians and humanitarian operations from further violence.

Integrated Response and Funding

NFI interventions must be integrated with broader health, nutrition, and WASH responses to address the interconnected nature of the crisis. This holistic approach ensures that basic needs

are met comprehensively. Furthermore, scaled funding under the 2026 humanitarian response plans is essential to bridge the existing gaps and prevent further deterioration of conditions, potentially averting famine-like scenarios.

Conclusion

The humanitarian situation in South Kordofan is extremely dire, marked by a critical lack of Non-Food Items exacerbated by relentless conflict and severe access restrictions. The 89% gap in emergency shelter and NFI support underscores a profound and immediate need for intervention. Without sustained and safe humanitarian access, coupled with adequate funding and integrated response strategies, the vulnerable populations in South Kordofan will continue to face unimaginable hardships, including heightened risks of disease, exposure to harsh elements, and deepening despair. A concerted, global effort is urgently required to provide life-saving assistance and protect those caught in the crossfire.

Recommended Further Inquiries

- Long-term recovery strategies for conflict-affected regions in Sudan
- Role of local communities in humanitarian response in South Kordofan
- Effectiveness of cash-based interventions in South Kordofan
- Impact of climate change on humanitarian needs in South Kordofan

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