

17<sup>th</sup> December 2025

## The Situation of Older People in Sudan

**Sudan Inclusion Task Force in collaboration with HelpAge International and the Sudan Protection Cluster**

### Background and Objective

Since the conflict broke out in Sudan in April 2023, civilians have faced multiple displacements due to the intensified conflicts and forced displacement within the country. Apart from women and children, older people are amongst the most at-risk population groups found during the displacement. This report aims to explore the situation of older people during this conflict, for example, at the displacement site and during the emergency. This report is based on a desk review of various sources, and the needs of older people are summarized with key recommendations proposing the way forward to improve the situation of older people.



From statistical data, older people formed part of the displaced population, according to the Public Health Situation Analysis (PHSA) published in March 2025, out of 20.3 million people identified

as needing health assistance, one million are older people.<sup>1</sup> Data from the Population Dashboard (September 2024) indicate 4% are older men and 4% are older women in the IDP sites, and approximately 3% of refugees are women aged 60 and above, and 3% are men aged 60 and above in refugee sites ([UNHCR Data Portal](#)).<sup>2</sup> Disability statistics for Sudan in 2008 show that out of a total population of 1,463,034 persons with disabilities, 28% are aged 60 or older.<sup>3</sup> ([Sudan 2008 | Arab Digital Inclusion Platform](#)). Moreover, the Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024 identified 5% of older people in need out of a total population of 24.8 million.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>World Health Organization, *Public Health Situation Analysis: Sudan Conflict* (Mar. 10, 2025), available at [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/2021-dha-docs/20250310\\_phsa\\_sudan-conflict.pdf?sfvrsn=d1b69fc1\\_3](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/2021-dha-docs/20250310_phsa_sudan-conflict.pdf?sfvrsn=d1b69fc1_3).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Sudan Situation – Operational Data Portal*, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation>.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, *Sudan launches Arabic version of the World Report on Disability* (9 Dec. 2012), available at <https://www.emro.who.int/sdn/sudan-events/disability-arabicreport-launch.html>. [emro.who.int]

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024 – Summary (Re-prioritization)*

## Older People's Situation at the Displacement Site

The Site Management Cluster's Site Assessment Tool and Population Demographics Report (2025) highlighted that 12% of the total population (162,277) found in the IDP sites were older people. The assessments were conducted in 37 sites across 2 states, including the River Nile and Red Sea. When examining the humanitarian situation at the site level using the site assessment, which portrays the multisectoral response in the targeted areas, around 50% of the participants said the overall condition of the site was poor and inadequate. The example below shows how inadequate the respective sectors are, based on data extracted from the site assessment tool findings.<sup>5</sup> The below results of the site assessment showed the dire condition for the overall displaced population with unmet needs across the sectors at the site-level intervention. Since older people are around 12% of the displaced population living in the sites, they are also impacted by these conditions.

	Protection: 23% said the protection conditions are poor, lacking adequate response.
	73% said the general food condition is poor, and 63% obtain support from the community, which could severely impact older individuals who have limited mobility or specific dietary needs.
	Shelter/NFI: 62% of IDPs are living without shelter, and 58% of them have never received shelter kits.
	73 % of the population reported poor WASH conditions, which will increase the risk of disease among older people. 42% of them said there is not enough clean water for all households.
	The overall health conditions (61%) are reported as poor, with many facilities lacking essential medicines and services.
	Livelihoods: 92% of people reported poor livelihood conditions, which may leave older people with limited means to support themselves.

## Older People's Situation in the Recent Displacement and Humanitarian Response

On November 14th, 2025, the United Nations warned that over 21 million people in Sudan are now facing acute food insecurity, representing 45 per cent of the country's entire population, after more than two and a half years of conflict, and famine situations were confirmed in the cities of El Fasher and Kadugli,

<sup>5</sup> CCCM Cluster, *January 2025 Site Assessment Factsheet – Final* (Apr. 2025), available at <https://www.cccmcluster.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/January%202025%20Site%20Assessment%20Factsheet%20Final.pdf>.

both of which are largely cut off from humanitarian assistance. Older people were also affected by the recent crisis. Since the onset of the armed conflict, hundreds of older persons have been displaced from Khartoum and other cities in search of safety. Some were forcibly uprooted due to shelling in their neighborhoods, while others live in the diaspora following the displacement of their families.<sup>6</sup>

Reports were received that thousands fled the areas, mostly women, children, and older people, on foot for miles to find safety in overcrowded camps.<sup>7</sup> Between October 18th and 20th, 2025, around 900 families, including many older people, arrived in Tawila locality, North Darfur, fleeing violence in El-Fasher. Many walked over 50 km to reach safety.<sup>8</sup>

In Tawila and the surrounding areas, displaced families are living in the open, with no shelter, sanitation, or protection. Hunger and disease are spreading fast. The situation is unbearable; however, there are no other alternative options.<sup>9</sup> The humanitarian context shows large-scale displacement across Sudan, meaning older people are among those displaced and lose access to care, social support, and security. The humanitarian appeal notes that older people are among the most severely affected.<sup>10</sup>

The conflict has triggered one of the fastest and most severe displacement crises. Between April 10th and 13th, more than 303,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), primarily women, girls, children, and older people, arrived in Tawila. Daily arrivals continue at a rate of 30–40 households ([UNFPA-Sudan](#)).

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<sup>6</sup> Dabanga Sudan. *Sudan Media Forum: War being waged on the elderly in Sudan*. Published August 3, 2025. Available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-media-forum-war-being-waged-on-the-elderly-in-sudan>. Accessed December 9, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations News, *Sudan: Migration chief hears horrific accounts of exodus from El Fasher* (Nov. 12, 2025), available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166366>. [news.un.org]

<sup>8</sup> Instagram, (Urgent Humanitarian Appeal – Tawila, North Darfur)(posted by Hope and heavenfor refugee), (Sunday, October 19, 2025), available at [https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQChjxWjDIB/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQChjxWjDIB/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, *Donate to Sudan Crisis* (Crisis Relief), available at <https://crisisrelief.un.org/en/donate-sudan-crisis>. (Crisis Relief)

<sup>10</sup> World Health Organization, *Sudan – WHO Health Emergency Appeal 2025* (Jan. 16, 2025), available at <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/sudan--who-health-emergency-appeal-2025>. [who.int]

UN Crisis Relief also released a statement stating that “Recent reports from El Fasher, North Darfur, confirm mass killings, attacks on hospitals, and the abduction of health workers. Thousands more are now fleeing - mostly women, children, and the elderly. They walk for miles to reach safety in overcrowded camps”. (United Nations, *Sudan: Suffering on an Incomprehensible Scale* (Crisis Relief), available at <https://crisisrelief.un.org/en/sudan>)

## Needs of Older People in Sudan:

### A. Protection, Displacement, and Exclusion

According to OHCHR, older people are among those acutely at risk<sup>11</sup>. Older men and women are often excluded from targeting in aid projects, especially in hard-to-reach areas. This exclusion leaves them unable to access essential support services. The report also emphasizes that they face increased risks of violence, exploitation, and social exclusion ([PAU Sudan](#)).<sup>12</sup>

#### Testimonies from Older People:

"Shelling and a drone attacks were happening all the time. They hit us with the back of their rifles day and night unless we hid in the house. At three in the morning, we snuck out of the house, so we arrived at Hilat Alth, where we were robbed. They left us with nothing. I came here barefoot and even my shoes were taken".

(Older Woman, [Al Jazeera News](#))

The Sudan Protection Monitoring Snapshot (August–October 2025) reports that 16% of Key Informant Interview respondents indicated that older persons face risks when performing daily tasks or accessing essential services. The main threats include insecurity, mobility limitations, and restricted access to services. Furthermore, observations reveal that older people encounter greater difficulties in moving during security incidents and often lack strong support networks, which further heighten their vulnerability.

The social researcher Maysoon Al-Sharif stated that "*older people in the shelter camps feel that they are not cared for and neglected, whether by the state, organizations, and sometimes families, which makes them vulnerable to many social, psychological, and physical problems. Social isolation under the conditions of war is the harshest thing that the older people face, as it causes their psychological state to deteriorate, especially with the loss of friends and distance from social roles, which can lead to a feeling of loneliness and sadness*"<sup>13</sup>

### B. Health Care and Functional Impairment

Older people in Sudan face compounded physical and mental health vulnerabilities, especially in displacement contexts. Studies show that 44% of older people (aged 60–79 and 80+) experience depression, and among internally displaced persons, older age cohorts are significantly more likely to

<sup>11</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "UN experts demand urgent action to protect civilians in Sudan as conflict intensifies", Press Release, 3 October 2025

<sup>12</sup> Global Protection Cluster/UNHCR, "Sudan: Protection at Breaking Point – Sudan 2025 Analysis of Civilian Harm, Denial of Aid, and Other Grave Violations", Protection Analysis Update, September 2025.

<sup>13</sup> Dabanga Sudan. *Sudan Media Forum: War being waged on the elderly in Sudan*. Published August 3, 2025. Available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-media-forum-war-being-waged-on-the-elderly-in-sudan>. Accessed December 9, 2025.

experience poor physical health and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to younger groups. These findings highlight that older people are at heightened risk of both chronic physical conditions and severe psychosocial distress, making integrated health care and mental health support essential for their well-being and survival.<sup>14</sup>

According to the WHO Health Emergency Appeal 2025, older people alongside women, children, and displaced populations, have been severely affected by the collapse of health infrastructure. The destruction of facilities and shortage of medical personnel mean older individuals cannot access essential care for chronic conditions, injuries, and age-related illnesses.<sup>15</sup>

One Sudanese person interviewed in the media, described the health condition of a number of older people as:

*“Some are living with diabetes, others complain of heart disease, and a third group has lost the ability to see due to poor vision, and the majority do not have the money to buy medicines and save on the cost of treatment. Many older people have lost their lives as a result of the interruption of life-saving medicines, the lack of functioning health centres and the disruption of dialysis centres across Sudan,”* <sup>16</sup>.

### C. Food Security, Basic Needs & Living Conditions

As shown in the situation of displacement at the site level, older people require assistance in meeting basic needs such as; food, shelter, water, and sanitation, especially given Sudan's crisis environment. The broader food security crisis in Sudan (precipitated by conflict, displacement, economic collapse) implies that older people will be disproportionately impacted due to their limited ability to work and limited access to resources. Older people need targeted food assistance, cash transfers, access to safe shelter, clean water, and WASH services tailored to their age-related needs (e.g., mobility issues).

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<sup>14</sup> A study of older adults (aged 60–79 and 80+) in Gezira State found a 44% prevalence of depression among older individuals' respondents. ([PMC](#)). Among IDPs in White Nile State, older age cohorts showed a higher likelihood of poor physical health and PTSD compared to younger groups. ([BioMed Central](#))

<sup>15</sup> The World Health Organization Health Emergency Appeal 2025 notes that in Sudan, “women, children, the older people, and the large population of displaced persons have been particularly severely affected by the lack of available health services” due to the destruction or collapse of health infrastructure ([World Health Organization](#))

<sup>16</sup> Dabanga Sudan. *Sudan Media Forum: War being waged on the elderly in Sudan*. Published August 3, 2025. Available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-media-forum-war-being-waged-on-the-elderly-in-sudan>. Accessed December 9, 2025.

According to the Sudan Tribune report, in September 2025, more than 20 older people died from hunger and diseases over the past 40 days after fleeing the Abu Shouk camp in North Darfur.<sup>17</sup> A local humanitarian commission also stated on October 18th, 2025 that at least 58 older people died of hunger in the besieged North Darfur city of El Fasher within two months after armed actors cut off food supplies.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Key Challenges and Gaps:**

- Health infrastructure is severely damaged, with many non-functional facilities, and these could put many older people's lives in danger, especially those who have non-communicable diseases.
- There is no consistent data on older people and their situation; humanitarian programmes often lack sex, age, and disability sensitive data, leading to under-informed interventions.
- Humanitarian responses rarely include tailored approaches for older people; their participation and that of their representative organization in program design and implementation is minimal

#### **Recommendations for Humanitarian Organisations:**

- Humanitarian activities must prioritize the most at-risk groups, including older people, ensuring their safety and dignity.
- Ensure that programming is inclusive of older people's needs, including access to services, income opportunities, protection measures, and communication strategies.
- Invest in building the capacity of staff to effectively respond to the needs of older people, including training on age-sensitive approaches and understanding age-related vulnerabilities
- Ensure the participation of older people and their associations in all humanitarian programme cycles from assessment to implementation and monitoring.
- Advocate for the identification and removal of the barriers that prevent older people from accessing humanitarian assistance, including protection services, and ensure the allocation of dedicated funding in all projects to address the specific needs of this group.
- Collect and analyze data disaggregated by age, gender, and disability to inform evidence-based programming and highlight the impact of crises on older populations.

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<sup>17</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Hunger kills 171 children in Sudan's besieged El Fasher, report says" (18 October 2025).

<sup>18</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Dozens of children, elderly die of hunger after fleeing Sudan's Darfur camp", 28 September 2025.