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Country Profile: Sudan

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Country Profile: Sudan

Bordering the Red Sea and comprised mostly of ethnic Arabs, Sudan is located in North Africa and is deemed part of the Middle East. As a result of the first and second Sudanese Civil Wars (1955–1972 and 1983–2005), and the ensuing political turmoil following the conflict in Darfur (2003–present), Sudan is considered one of the most heavily mined countries in the world.¹ After 25 years of armed struggle between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M), Africa's longest running conflict left 19 of what used to be Sudan's 25 states contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war.² In 2005 the Sudanese government signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the SPLM, hoping to end the turmoil by promising more autonomy for the South. Via a referendum in 2011, southern Sudan overwhelmingly voted to secede, establishing South Sudan on 9 July 2011. The 25 Sudanese states were divided into two countries, Sudan and South Sudan with 15 and 10 states, respectively. Since the split, two additional states have been created in Sudan, increasing the total number to 17.³

Convention Obligations

Sudan signed the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* on 4 December 1997 and ratified it on 13 October 2003.⁴ A landmine impact survey completed in May 2009 and records of dangerous areas obtained by the United Nations Mine Action Office reveal that 310 suspected hazardous areas remain to be confirmed or cancelled; 158 confirmed mined areas require clearance and 731 dangerous areas require further survey.⁵ In March 2008 Sudan completed the destruction of its 10,566 stockpiled anti-personnel mines, a day before the treaty mandated date of 1 April 2008.⁶

Mines and ERW contamination in Darfur restrict civilian access to fundamental humanitarian aid. Darfur relies entirely on the United Nations Mission in Darfur, a joint operation between the African Union and the U.N., for its mine action funding, which amounted to US\$9,855,600 in 2010.⁷ The majority of this money has been set aside for emergency response and clearance operations. In 2011 the United Nations Mine Action Service located 196 dangerous areas in Darfur, and 156 have been cleared to date.⁸

Casualties and Victim Assistance



Figure 1. Sudan
Figure courtesy of CIA World Factbook.

In 2011 *The Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* recorded 122 mine/ERW casualties in Sudan (32 killed/90 injured), more than three times the recorded casualties in 2009. Multiple factors contributed to these rising figures. The continual violence in South Kordofan, a state in the southern part of Sudan, has led to an influx of civilian and militant populations into heavily contaminated regions. The *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* estimates that there have been a total of 1,773 mine/ERW casualties (525 killed/1248 injured) in Sudan.⁶

In 2010 Sudan's National Mine Action Centre launched a national casualty database. This new database has improved Sudan's data collection abilities. The data can be grouped by sex or age to identify specific needs of each group and how to address them.

The Victim Assistance Working Group is under the direct supervision of NMAC; it is the largest coordinating organization in Sudan. This umbrella organization serves as a conduit of information sharing between the various actors in Sudan. Approximately 20 nongovernmental organizations remain active participants. The Victim Assistance Working Group was a member of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities that, in 2011, finalized a Five Year Strategic Disability Plan 2012–2016 that advocates for the interests and

needs of mine survivors. Despite plans in 2010 to conduct a victim needs assessment in the eastern states of Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Khartoum, no victim assistance has been provided since 2011. Today, the majority of rehabilitation services are dependent on funds from external donors. Coupled with the lack of available qualified technicians, this has led to prolonged waiting periods after victims apply for care.⁹

Mine Risk Education

Risk education programs have reached a large portion of the country. More than 220,000 people received risk education in 2011, of which nearly 60 percent were children. UNICEF works in school systems in the Nuba Mountains and Western and Southern Darfur to help continue risk education after its program leaves the area by providing training to teachers and education materials to children.

In addition, JASMAR Human Security Organization, Friends of Peace and Development Organization, Organization for Care of War Disabled and Protection from Landmines, Strengthening Protection and Community Empowerment in South Kordofan, Association for Aid and Relief, and MAG (Mines Advisory Group) conduct mine risk education activities throughout the Ganaref (2010–2011), Red Sea (2011), South Kordofan (2012) and Blue Nile states as well as Western and Southern Darfur.⁸ Between May 2010 and June 2011, MAG reported it provided 15,498 people with general MRE sessions. MAG also trains teachers, religious leaders and village authority figures to deliver MRE to people within their community.¹⁰

Clearance and Demining

There continues to be an urgent need for clearance operations in Sudan. Currently, there are 300 known hazardous areas, but that number is expected to rise due to the continuing violence in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states.¹¹

The Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) provided US\$1.1 million to fund projects in Sudan with MAG and DanChurchAid during the 2011 fiscal year. DanChurchAid supports a multi-task team in Southern Kordofan that has cleared approximately 60,000 sq km (23,166

sq mi) of contaminated land.¹² In addition to providing MRE, MAG has worked in Sudan since 2006, clearing 1,011,020 sq m (250 acres) of land and removing 3,194 landmines and unexploded ordnance. 

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