SITUATION OVERVIEW

Since the first reported case of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sudan on 13 March 2020, the number of confirmed cases in the country continues to rise. As of 6 August, the number of positive COVID-19 cases in Sudan stands at 11,780 with 6,194 recovered and 763 deaths. The virus has now spread to all of Sudan’s 18 states, with Khartoum state accounting for about 70 per cent of all reported cases in the country.

On 7 July, the High Committee for Health Emergencies announced the ease of lockdown restrictions in Khartoum state. Domestic movement restrictions are still in place, with a curfew effective between 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Most internal state borders are expected to open soon, as well as public bus transportation between states to resume. Khartoum International Airport (KRT) is now partially open for entry and exit for flights to and from Egypt, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. The operating status includes scheduled cargo flights; humanitarian aid and technical and humanitarian support flights; flights of companies operating in the oil fields; evacuation flights for foreign nationals; and repatriation flights for Sudanese stranded abroad, which began on 21 June 2020. Port Sudan International Airport (PZU) remains closed for entry and exit. Government institutions have resumed work on 12 July, with a maximum number of employees allowed not exceeding 50 per cent. All staff are required to wear face masks and workplaces are to be sanitised regularly.

Despite containment measures adopted in Sudan, the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase daily, placing additional pressure on the country’s fragile health system. With health services already limited and strained, the pandemic is further limiting community resources and basic services, impacting livelihoods and increasing risk and vulnerability of vulnerable populations, including migrants, displaced persons and crisis affected populations. Before COVID-19, about 9.3 million people were already in need of humanitarian assistance across Sudan. The situation is now worsening as more and more people are unable to meet their basic needs.

The Federal Government, the United Nations and humanitarian partners have joined efforts to prevent and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Sudan. IOM is supporting COVID-19 response efforts in the areas of risk communication and community engagement, tracking mobility, camp coordination, infection prevention and control, case management at ‘points of entry’ (PoE), and migrant protection, among other areas.

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3. Of the 9.3 million people in need, 1.8 million are internally displaced people, 0.3 million are returnees, 1.1 million are refugees and 6.1 million are vulnerable residents. The majority of people in need are children aged between 0 and 17 (58%).
IOM is working closely and coordinating with relevant, government, national and international partners to support the COVID-19 response in Sudan, and to ensure migrants and displaced populations, especially those marginalised or in situations of vulnerability are included in response planning.

IOM is a member of the following COVID-19 working groups, composed of key partners/pillar leads set up to oversee and lead coordination, monitoring and reporting of the response in Sudan: Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), Disease Surveillance, Infection Prevention Control (IPC), and Case Management and Continuity of Essential Services. In addition, IOM serves as a co-lead with WHO on the points of entry (PoE) Pillar working group.

As border closures and travel restrictions have significantly affected movement across borders, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) continues to monitor and report on the locations, status and different restrictions in place at PoEs and other key locations of internal mobility in Sudan. These locations include: 11 land border crossing points, two airports and one blue border crossing point across the country. To date, DTM has published 14 Mobility Restriction updates. The latest IOM DTM Sudan COVID-19 Mobility Restriction Dashboard can be accessed here.

IOM DTM team has also been monitoring the impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures on IDPs, including impediments to IDP camp access in Darfur, and number of stranded IDPs and migrant children affected by mobility restrictions. As of 6 August, key informants reported a total of 754 IDP students studying in Khartoum, 29 students in South Darfur and eight students in Northern State who are currently stranded and unable to return home to IDP camps across North, South and West Darfur. An additional 420 IDP gold miners working in neighbouring Chad (170), Northern State (155) and South Darfur (95) are also reportedly unable to return home to IDP camps across West, North and South Darfur.
IOM continues to work with key partners and community-based networks to ensure migrants and mobile populations have access to timely, context-specific and correct public health information. IOM is an active member of the UN COVID-19 RCCE pillar working group, working together with partners to ensure a coordinated response, avoid duplications, share resources as well as advocate for an inclusive response.

To date, IOM through its Migrant Resource and Response Centre (MRRC) has reached over 1,941 migrants with COVID-19 awareness SMS messages in Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo, Hausa, and Somali, covering main languages spoken by migrants in Sudan. IOM’s Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Gedaref, in coordination with the State Child Welfare Council and the Ministry of Education conducted COVID-19 awareness sessions and provided personal protective equipment (PPE) to 54 Chadian migrant children and youth stranded across five religious schools (Khalwas) in Gedaref State. The MRC also conducted nine awareness sessions to Ethiopian and Nigerian migrant communities in Gedaref, reaching 546 individuals.

IOM’s Rapid Response Fund (RRF), through its implementing partner Concern Worldwide, trained 32 community volunteers (16 women and 16 men) on community hygiene promotion and COVID-19 awareness in ten gathering sites for IDPs in Ag Geneina, West Darfur. Mobile megaphones were used to share information about basic sanitation and COVID-19 prevention. To date, 27 awareness sessions aimed at improving overall hygiene and sanitation practices including latrine use and maintenance were conducted, reaching at least 2,350 persons (1,222 women and 1,128 men).

Under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, IOM worked with community leaders to raise awareness on COVID-19 prevention to 4,000 community members in West and Central Darfur.

IOM and WHO, together with the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior are organising a training for immigration and border staff on COVID-19 awareness, the correct use of PPE and on infection prevention and control.

IOM has begun the rehabilitation of screening and isolation facilities at Khartoum International Airport. Handwashing stations are being installed in the waiting area where passengers are taken after exiting the plane, to ensure that all passengers take precautionary measures before entering the airport. At the arrival terminal, IOM is rehabilitating sanitation facilities and installing an air purification system. In addition, IOM is rehabilitating the airport sewage network.

IOM has also installed five hand washing facilities, five water tanks and constructed 20 latrines at five land border crossing points in East Darfur (Baher el Arab, Jalal and Umm Dabbal locality, Alba’jara, Um Didan locality, Eldaein, and Eiferdous, Abu Sneeda localities). Awareness raising sessions for staff working at the PoEs was conducted and RCCE material was provided.
Assisted Voluntary Return for Sudanese Stranded Abroad

IOM is providing assistance to support the safe return and health screening of Sudanese nationals stranded overseas due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Between 22-24 June 2020, IOM supported the return of 1,325 Sudanese nationals coming from Egypt by road. IOM conducted an assessment in the quarantine centre regarding the facility and its capacity, testing methodology and conditions, and sterilisation practices conducted by the Civilian Defense Force. IOM also liaised with the Ministry of Health to prepare medical staff to conduct COVID-19 tests for 435 returnees on 23 June. A triage area was set up to register returnees.

IOM, in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Sudan in India and the Embassy of India in Sudan organised two charter flights to support the return of 297 Sudanese nationals stranded in India due to COVID-19 restrictions. The first plane arrived from Mumbai on 26 July carrying 155 passengers on board, while a second flight carrying 142 passengers came from Hyderabad on 30 July. Priority for repatriation flights has been given to the most vulnerable, including the elderly and those with underlying health issues. Many of those stranded in India were on a medical visa for treatment and identified as high priority. IOM supported the pre-departure and on-arrival medical services and health screening, facilitated visas for passengers, provided hygiene kits including, face masks, hand sanitiser, and COVID-19 informational material as well as provided medical escorts for passengers requiring medical assistance en route.

IOM is liaising closely with the GoS to support the repatriation of the most vulnerable of an estimated 11,000 Sudanese nationals who are stranded abroad, many in urgent need of assistance, while ensuring that public health measures are in place.

The provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is an essential part of prevention efforts during infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19. Combined with improved access to WASH services, IOM continues to support national capacity to implement infection prevention and control measures as these are an effective way to prevent or limit the transmission of the disease.

IOM, in close coordination with the State Ministry of Health in Khartoum and in the states of intervention, is in the process of finalizing plans for the rehabilitation of three health care facilities in Khartoum and one in El Fasher, North Darfur – improving access to WASH services and IPC measures. In addition, IOM is working on developing a Training of Trainers module and guidelines for the management of water sources, sanitation facilities and hygiene awareness messaging to promote capacity building for non-health workers in the areas of intervention to ensure the implementation of effective IPC measures.
Cleaning campaigns and hygiene promotion campaigns were conducted in El Leayet village, Ghubash locality West Kordofan, Dali and Argo IDP camps, Tawilla locality, North Darfur, Um Dafog town and El Mashaga camp for CAR refugees South Darfur, and Dilling town, Dilling locality, South Kordofan, benefiting over 23,000 IDPs, refugees and the host community.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

IOM with UNHCR is co-leading the COVID-19 IDP Camp Coordination Task Force to ensure effective multi-sectorial coordination of COVID-19 preparedness and response in IDP camps and settlements across Sudan. IOM is responsible for ensuring state-level coordination mechanisms are in place in Central Darfur, West Darfur, and South Kordofan states, while UNHCR is responsible for ensuring state-level coordination in North Darfur, East Darfur, South Darfur, and Blue Nile states.

Activities implemented to initiate camp coordination included the development of two data collection surveys. The first survey provides live site/camp profiles outlining the needs, response, and gaps in IDP camps. The second survey collects weekly updates on suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases in the IDP camps. Training for data collection has been conducted targeting lead agencies. The first round of data collection is completed and has been uploaded in the CCCM Global Cluster Sudan website. The second round of data collection is expected to start soon. Data collected is used to highlight the needs and gaps of COVID-19 services in IDP camps to better coordinate an effective response. The COVID-19 Needs and Services in IDP Camps, Sudan - Dashboard can be accessed here.

Migrant Protection

The current COVID-19 emergency is exacerbating all pre-existing vulnerabilities and risks of violence and discrimination, which can intersect with other factors such as gender, age and disability, but also nationality, status or ethnic origin. IOM is committed to ensuring the protection of migrants, displaced persons and other vulnerable populations remains at the centre of its COVID-19 response.

IOM continues to implement protection activities through its MRRC in Khartoum and MRC in Gedaref to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable migrants. Activities include: outreach to migrant communities through a helpline and SMS messages on COVID-19 awareness, phone-based medical information, and psycho-social support counselling (PSS), provision of medicine, distribution of RCCE posters on COVID-19, and provision of food and non-food items (NFIs). Activities also include the implementation of COVID-19 awareness activities and PPE distribution through community associations. To date, 418 migrants have been supported with PSS phone counselling, and 81 were provided with prescription support. IOM has provided medicine to 215 migrants staying at the Ethiopian community safe house and at collection points in Khartoum. Medication includes antibiotics, analgesia, medicine for hypertension, diabetes and multivitamins. Supplementing milk formula was also provided to 44 lactating mothers.

Emergency food support has been provided to a total of 2,446 migrants from the Ethiopian, Eritrean, Filipino, Nigerian, Nigerien and Chadian communities in Khartoum and Gedaref. Food bags include flour, lentils, sugar and oil. Further support has been given to unaccompanied children and youth stranded in religious schools (Khalwas) due containment measures currently in place. IOM has provided food support, hygiene kits and PPE to a total of 184 students across 19 schools in Khartoum and five schools in Gedaref.

Through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, IOM supported the voluntary and safe return of vulnerable Ethiopian migrants from Sudan to Ethiopia. On 29 July, 116 Ethiopian returnees (76 women, 41 men, including 3 minors) arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on a charter flight, assisted by the Government of Ethiopia. Prior to their departure, IOM provided fitness to travel medical screenings, one-on-one counselling, PSS support and pre-departure assistance including transportation to the airport. The most vulnerable among them will be provided with reintegration support under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.
Airport staff conducting health screenings at Khartoum International Airport using IOM provided PPE ©IOM Sudan 2020

IOM SUDAN’S RESPONSE IS SUPPORTED BY

Canada

EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK

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