

Famines in Sudan

Famines in Sudan are a recurring issue throughout history, attributed to various natural, economic, and political factors. One of the worst famines the country experienced was during the 1980s, particularly in 1983-1985, when severe drought and armed conflicts led to multiple famines.

The causes of famines in Sudan include:

Drought and Climate Change:

Sudan relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture, so changes in rainfall patterns lead to crop failures, resulting in food shortages.

Armed Conflicts:

Continuous conflicts in areas such as Darfur and South Sudan have displaced millions, leading to the loss of livelihoods.

Economic Deterioration:

The weakness of the Sudanese economy, inflation, and restrictions on imports and exports contribute to rising food prices, making it inaccessible to large segments of the population.

Government Policies:

Mismanagement of natural resources, corruption, and poor agricultural and economic planning have significantly worsened the situation.

International Isolation and Sanctions:

Periods of international isolation have made it difficult for Sudan to receive effective international aid.

Historical Famines:

The Mahdist Famine (1888-1892): One of the worst famines in Sudan's history, occurring during the Mahdist Revolution.

Natural Causes: Consecutive floods and droughts destroyed crops.

Human Causes: The Mahdist Revolution and the armed conflict between the Ansar and the Egyptian-Turkish forces exacerbated the situation.

Impact : This famine caused the death of approximately one-third of the population in northern and central Sudan. Major cities like Khartoum and Omdurman were severely affected.

The 1913-1914 Famine: Pre-World War I Drought.

Causes: Low rainfall led to crop failures in a country heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture.

Impact :Although exact statistics are unavailable, the impact was significant on farming communities in northern Sudan, prompting many to migrate or rely on aid.

The 1940-1941 Famine: World War II Drought.

Causes: Drought was the main factor, along with the repercussions of World War II, leading to food shortages and price hikes.

Impact: Many rural residents suffered from food shortages, but the impact was more limited compared to other famines.

The Great Famine (1983-1985):

Natural Causes: Severe drought affected vast areas of Sudan, especially in the west.

Armed Conflicts: The conflict between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement made it difficult to access affected areas.

Economic Policies :Failed government policies and poor resource management worsened the crisis.

Impact :This famine led to an estimated 250,000 deaths, with millions displaced internally or fleeing to neighboring countries in search of food and water.

The Darfur Famine(2005-2003)

Causes: The armed conflict between the Sudanese government and rebels in Darfur was the main reason, with civilians and agricultural infrastructure targeted.

Impact :The famine displaced around 2.5 million people, and tens of thousands died due to malnutrition and disease.

South Sudan Famine (2017)

Although South Sudan became independent in 2011, this famine is linked to the disturbances that occurred in Sudan before the secession.

Causes: Armed conflict between government forces and rebels, alongside drought and poor management.

Impact: Around 100,000 people faced the threat of starvation, with 4.9 million people in urgent need of food assistance.

Food Crisis(2023-2021)

Causes: Ongoing armed conflicts, especially in Darfur, economic decline, and the continuing effects of climate change on agriculture.

Impact :By 2021, around 3.6 million people in Sudan were facing acute food insecurity. By 2023, the number of those needing food aid reached approximately 11 million.

The Current Famine(2024-2023)

This is part of a larger humanitarian crisis that has worsened in recent years, particularly since the armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) began in April 2023. The conflict has deteriorated both security and the economy, directly affecting food and essential needs.

Key Causes:

Armed Conflict: The war between the army and RSF has destroyed agricultural infrastructure, disrupted supply chains, and displaced millions. The conflict has directly affected access to farmlands and food production.

Economic Decline: Sudan was already facing an economic crisis before the war, and the outbreak of conflict has severely worsened the economy. Inflation has reached unprecedented levels, driving food prices up and making them unaffordable for many.

Climate Change and Drought: As in most previous periods, drought and lack of rainfall in some agricultural areas have contributed to reduced crop production. Land degradation due to climate change has further worsened the situation.

Population Displacement: The ongoing war has led to the displacement of millions of people internally and externally. The UN estimates that around 5.6 million people have been displaced either within Sudan or across borders to neighboring countries. These displaced populations face significant challenges in accessing food and shelter.

Figures and Statistics:

According to UN reports, by mid-2023, around 11 million people in Sudan were in urgent need of food aid.

Around 20 million people (42% of the population) suffer from food insecurity.

Impact on Children:

Children are the most affected by this famine, with reports indicating that around 3 million children in Sudan are suffering from acute malnutrition, urgently requiring medical and nutritional intervention.