

Executive Summary: Crisis Mapping of the Sudanese Diaspora in the UK



Background

There are an estimated 35,000 people who were born in Sudan living in the UK, and an estimated 20,000 people of Sudanese nationality currently resident in the UK (ONS, 2020). There are several generations of Sudanese diasporans in the UK.

The profile of the Sudanese diaspora in the UK also varies according to the location; due to the geographical spread of the Sudanese diaspora in the UK.

Geographically, the **diaspora is concentrated in the larger cities**, with the geographical spread influenced heavily by the Home Office Dispersal Policy (Home Office, 2021).

Although the Sudanese diaspora lives in all four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland), most are based in England or Scotland.

Mapping Study

This mapping project aims to understand more about the Sudanese diaspora in the United Kingdom and to reflect the diversity within this community.

The mapping addressed intergenerational diversity, gender, and other demographics to ensure representation of all communities.

The research mapped the diaspora's **humanitarian activities, engagement, assistance habits, methods, and challenges**, and captured an understanding of what interests and motivates the Sudanese diaspora in the UK to respond to urgent humanitarian needs in Sudan.

The project also gathered information on the Sudanese diaspora in the UK and their patterns of engagement with Sudan and within their diaspora communities, as well as anticipated future needs and obstacles to their participation.

Methodology

The study deployed a mixed methods approach to gather information on the Sudanese diaspora in the UK and their patterns of engagement with Sudan and within their diaspora communities. To reflect on diaspora humanitarian responses during the current crisis, data was collected using Desk Research, Social media analysis, Online Survey (99 respondents), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) (7 respondents), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (31 respondents), and Case Studies.

The project targeted **first, second, and third-generation Sudanese diaspora** based in **London, Brighton, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast** to participate in the KIIs and FGDs. The KIIs, FGDs, and Case Studies collected rich qualitative data on the UK-based Sudanese diaspora's knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to engagement with Sudan. Additionally, the study deployed quantitative data collection using an online survey.

Key Findings

Online Survey

A total of 111 online questionnaires were collected during the data collection phase of this study, of which 99 were valid due to consent and residency in the UK restrictions.

Most respondents (74.75%) were aged 31–60. Of the online survey respondents, 61% were female, while 36% were male.

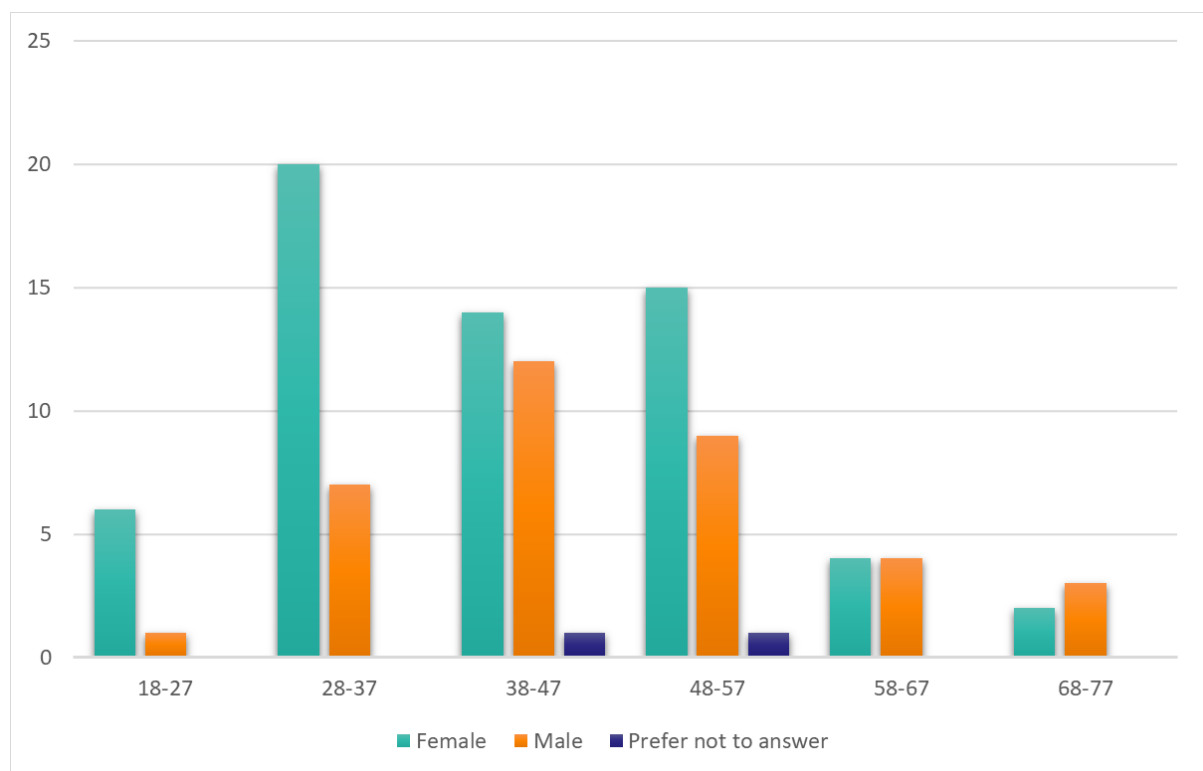


Figure 1 – Age and sex distribution of respondents

Responding to the Current Crisis in Sudan

Data collected demonstrate that the Sudanese diaspora in the UK are **active contributors** to responses to the current crisis in Sudan across a wide range of humanitarian clusters, including **protection, health, cash, food security, WASH, education, transport, and energy**.

Most of their support was **directed to local civil society groups and networks in Sudan** such as the Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), often linked to areas within Sudan where they had family or community ties.

They have also conducted **vital crisis advocacy and media engagement activities** to keep the crisis in Sudan in the public eye since the start of the current conflict in April 2023, including lobbying for Sudanese nationals resident in the UK (for example, those working in the UK National Health Service to be included as part of UK efforts to evacuate British citizens from Sudan at the start of the conflict). These contributions were not limited to 1st generation Sudanese diaspora in the UK, and encompassed intergenerational activities and engagement.

Survey respondents reported they contribute to causes related to Sudan in many ways by donating money or giving time **to support humanitarian causes or charities related to Sudan**. Most respondents supported Healthcare (21%), relief materials and supplies (14%), conflict casualties (11%), Women (9%) and provided support to Sudanese diaspora in the UK (8%) (see Figure 2 below).

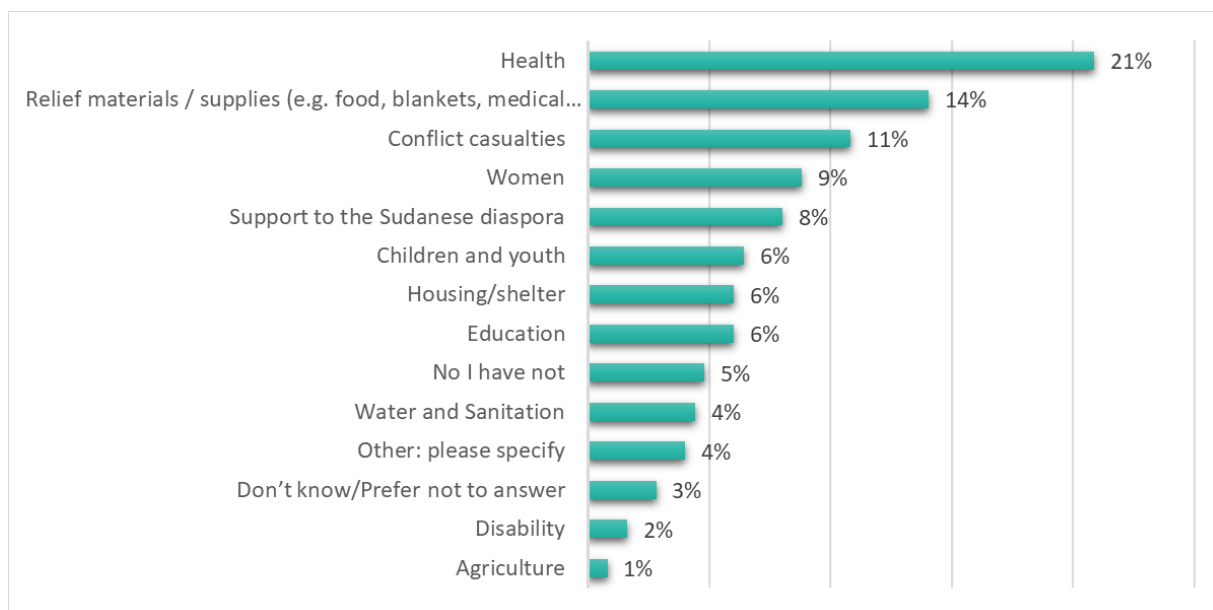


Figure 2 Diaspora support for causes in Sudan

To support the causes listed in Figure 2, the majority of respondents (30.6%) **donated money**. Other means of contributing were **sharing information** and critical updates about what is happening in Sudan (23%), **advocacy and raising awareness** (20%), **volunteering time** (18%), and sending **noncash donations** such as relief materials or supplies (6%) (Figure 3 below).

Other respondents cited “Supported families to move from Khartoum to other cities in Sudan” and “Working with my organisation to support Sudan”.

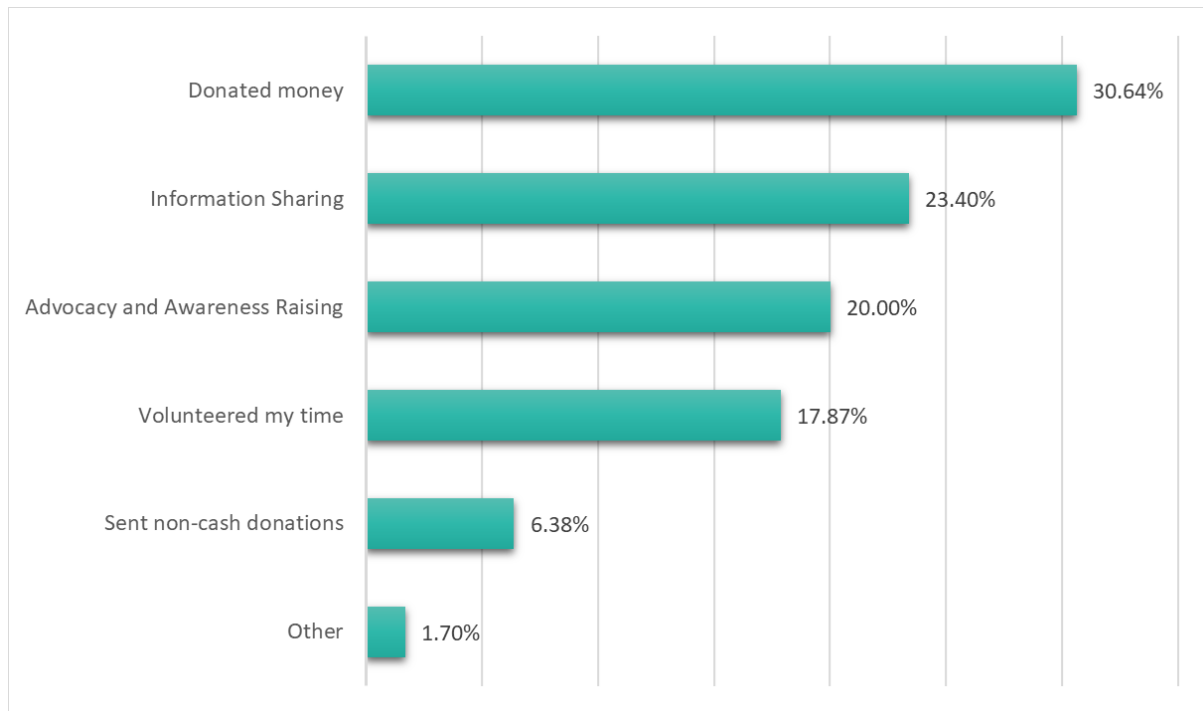


Figure 3 – Forms of diaspora support

54% of the respondents reported that they sent money to Sudan since the war began in April 2023. 31.9% sent money to neighbouring countries as well as Sudan. 14% of respondents sent money to neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, and Ethiopia (see Figure 4 below).

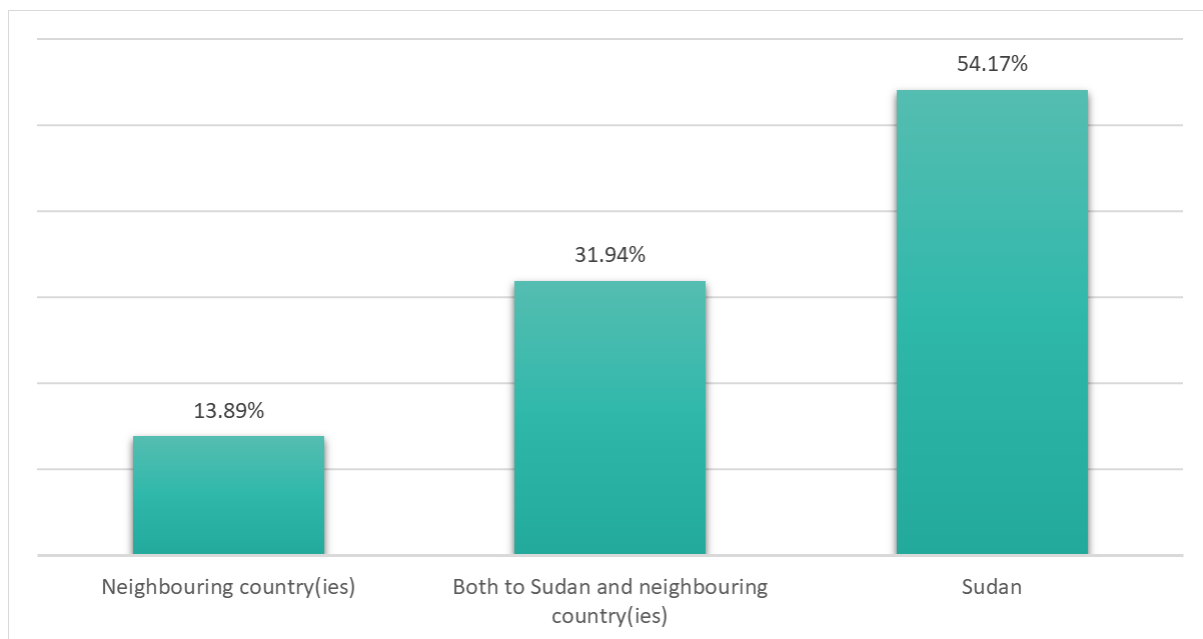


Figure 4 – Diaspora financial support to Sudan

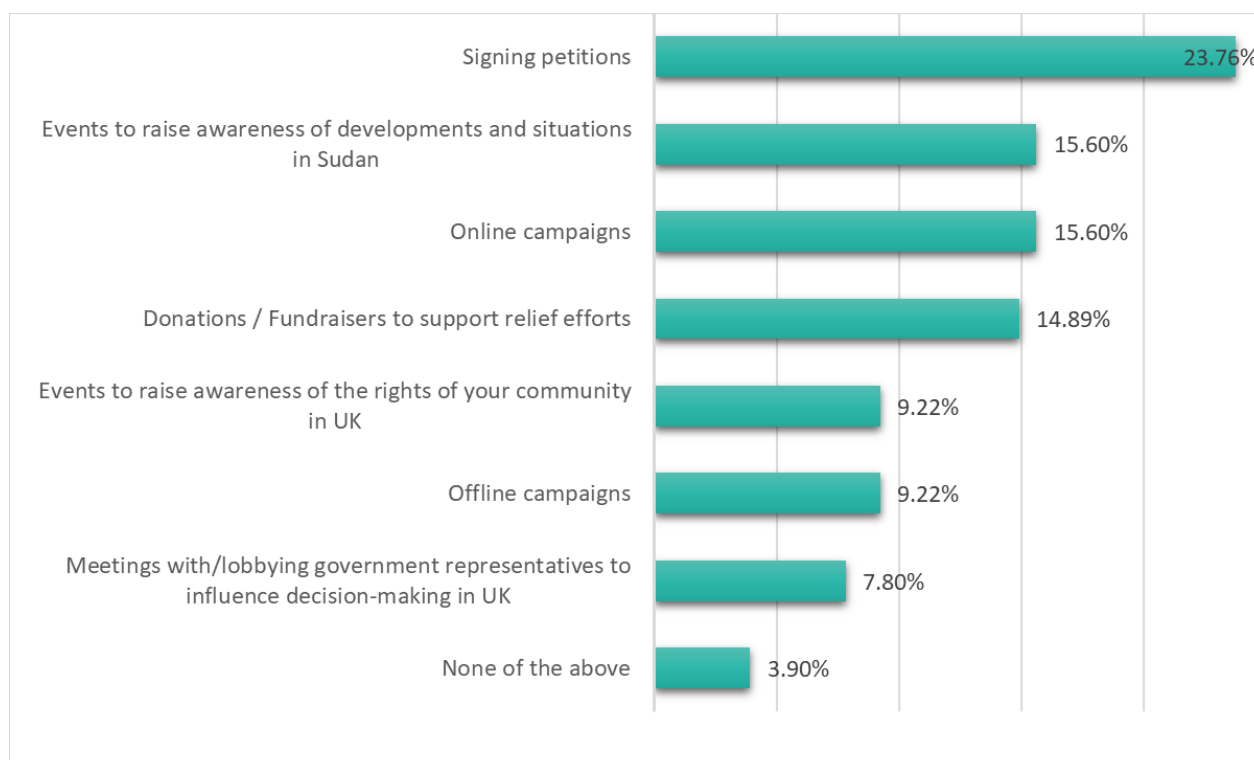


Figure 5 – Other forms of contribution in responses to the current Sudan crisis

Survey respondents engaged in other activities related to the current crisis in Sudan, including **signing petitions** (24%) and **participating in events** to raise awareness about the developments in Sudan (15%), taking part in **online campaigns** (15%) and **raising funds to support relief efforts** (15%).

Participants also contributed to raising awareness about the rights of Sudanese diaspora in the UK (9%), offline campaigns related to the crisis (9%) and meeting with government representatives to influence decision making in the UK (8%) (Figure 5). Other participants mentioned participating in protests and demonstrations to raise public awareness about the crisis.

Helping rebuild Sudan in the future

Respondents' future contributions to Sudan

The majority of survey respondents (74.75%) said that it is **very likely that they will contribute to future reconstruction** in Sudan.

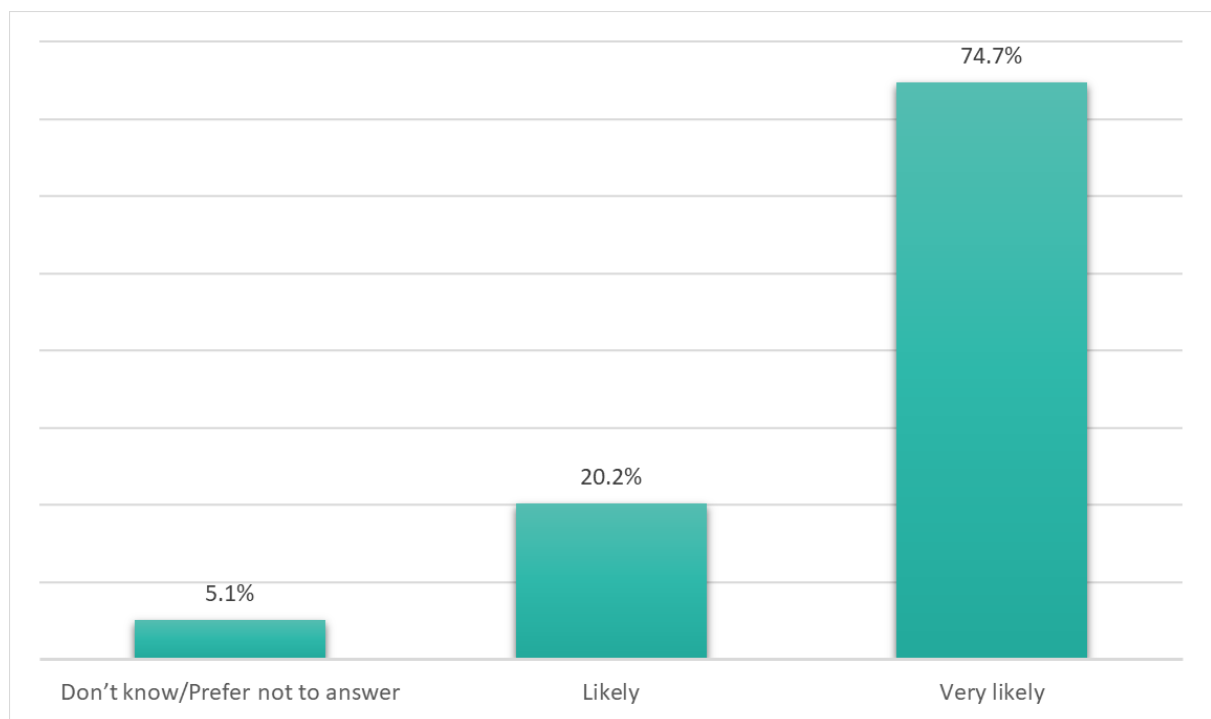


Figure 6 Diaspora interest in future contributions to Sudan

Potential types of contributions to reconstruction in Sudan in the future

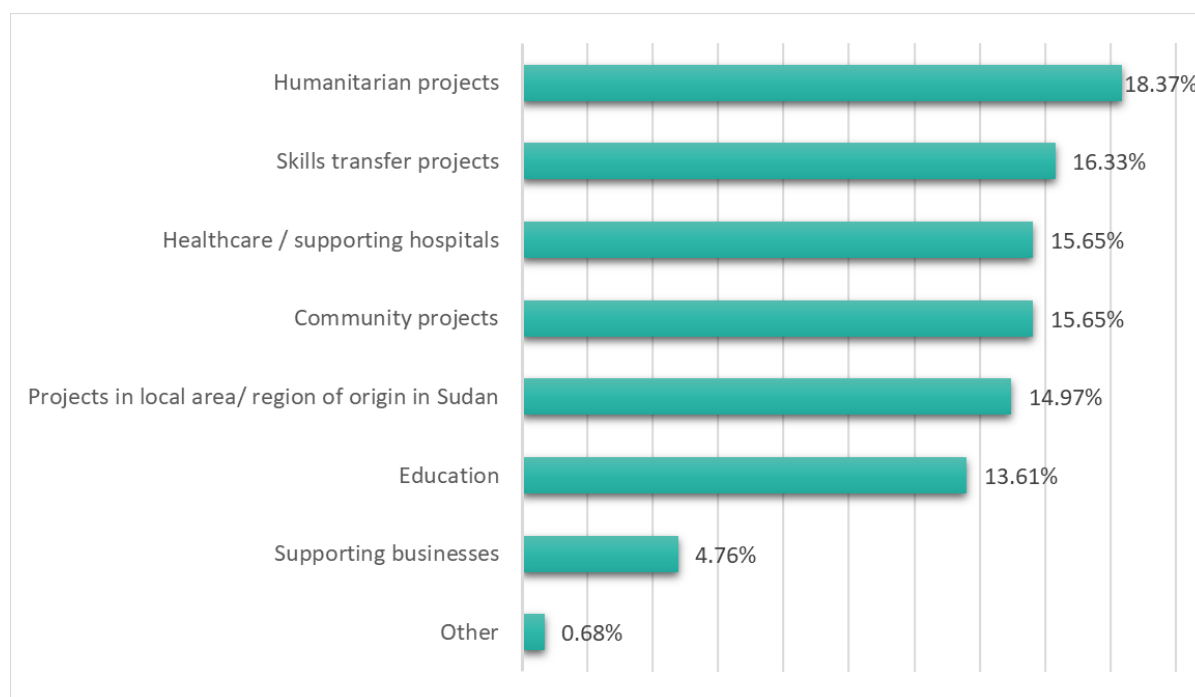


Figure 7 Potential types of contributions to reconstruction

When asked how they would potentially like to contribute to reconstruction in Sudan in the future, 18% of respondents reported that they will potentially contribute to **humanitarian projects**, 16% to **skills transfer projects**, and 15% said they will contribute to the **health sector and supporting the rebuilding of hospitals**.

In addition, 15% reported wanting to contribute **to community projects**, 14% to **projects in their local area back in Sudan**, 13% wanted to **support education**, and a small percentage were interested in supporting businesses in Sudan.

Respondents also mentioned they would like to contribute by supporting **legal aid programmes**, supporting **children and families traumatized by wars in Sudan** and research (Figure 7 above).

Conditions needed for diaspora to support reconstruction efforts in Sudan



Figure 8 Conditions needed for diaspora to support reconstruction efforts in Sudan

The main conditions cited by participants for future contributions to reconstruction in Sudan are the **end to the conflict in the country** (18.5%) and improvement in **safety and security** in Sudan (15%). Other factors included **improved rule of law/legal protections** (11.6%), **reduction of corruption** in the country (9%), more trust in government (8%), better regulatory transparency/less bureaucracy (7%), and **reduced cost of financial transactions** (5%).

Other respondents reported factors including: access to mentoring or other support services (6%), availability of family members, friends, or business associates present in country (5%), better control over how the money is spent (6%), a more secure residence status in the UK (3%), and a more secure job in the UK (4.5%).

Additional comments from respondents on this topic included:

"I will contribute at any stage, the options you have are great, but it just shows the limitations to contributions, for example, I can't organise a medical mission without ensuring safety of those professionals who will participate."

"I would support all efforts as long as I'm financially capable and have time to help"

Contributions in the UK and elsewhere

Participants were also asked whether they have engaged or participated in any support activities in the UK. Participants' engagement with the community in the UK and elsewhere varied.

Some participants were **active in advocacy and public awareness-raising** activities; others engaged with the Sudanese community in the UK through events and other informal first and second-generation diaspora network activities.

Participants provided assistance **in direct and indirect ways to support multiple causes** (see Figure 9 below). Participants were also motivated by their own personal interests and professional backgrounds.

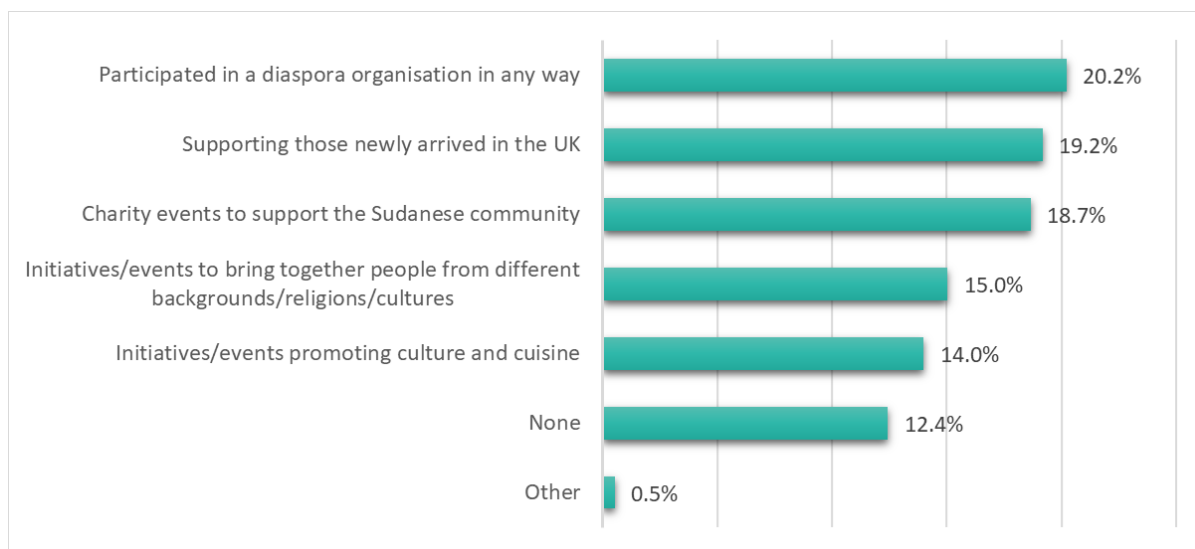


Figure 9 Activities in the UK

The majority of survey participants participated in a diaspora organisation in some way (20%). 19% supported those who have newly arrived in the UK as a result of the conflict, as well as asylum seekers and refugees prior to the current war. One participant also reported working with an organisation to support education in Sudan.

Information – sources

Sources for current, accurate information on the situation on the ground varied among the participants. Some participants **relied on updates from their family members in Sudan** for up-to-date information on the crisis.

Participants involved in organisations that provided direct support to people in Sudan were able to receive information from people in their organizational networks in Sudan.

Sudanese or Arabic-speaking news outlets such as Radio Dabanga, Al Jazeera, and The New Arab, **were viewed as being more reliable and trustworthy** than

mainstream news outlets such as the BBC or Sky News.

Social media was also cited as **key information source**, with WhatsApp being the most popular social media platform for finding news on Sudan. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were also mentioned, with Twitter and Instagram being highlighted for the ability to use hashtags to find information on the crisis.

2nd and subsequent generations of Sudanese diaspora were more likely to use TikTok as a source for information compared to older members of the Sudanese diaspora.

Challenges

Participants identified various challenges and barriers in their efforts to support Sudan since the current crisis started in April 2023.

The most significant challenge was with **sending money to people and organisations in Sudan**, as, due to the collapse of the banking system and other key infrastructure such as telecommunications, participants found it difficult to send money Sudan. Participants were able to find other methods of sending money to Sudan, including sending phone credit, or using financial channels through Chad.

The **cost-of-living crisis in the UK** also made it difficult for participants to provide financial support to people in Sudan or neighbouring countries.

Another significant challenge mentioned by the participants was **lack of support from the international community for Sudanese people**, especially when compared to the support given to Ukrainians.

Participants felt the crisis in Sudan was **not getting much attention in the media** and noted how **evacuees are struggling to find countries that will grant them entry** for long periods of time. Other challenges participants faced included **difficulty contacting loved ones in Sudan** due to poor telecoms infrastructure, **locating trustworthy news sources**, and **supporting people in the Darfur region**.

Importance of visibility and experience-sharing

Many participants felt that Sudan had been **ignored by the international community and the media**, especially after the evacuation of diplomatic and INGO staff from Khartoum, and there was a lack of information on how to help and how to overcome barriers to their responses to the crisis. Participants also noted the **lack of visibility of diaspora and local civil society efforts** by institutional humanitarian partners.

Participant Suggestions

Participants were pleased that IOM and Shabaka had created this initiative and were vocal about the various ways IOM and Shabaka could support Sudan and the Sudanese diaspora during this challenging time.

Potential areas for support raised by participants included:

- Finding ways to **support refugees in Sudan** who had been doubly displaced,
- Assistance in providing **safe channels to send money**.
- Supporting **consensus-building with the Sudanese diaspora** by providing online spaces for brainstorming sessions,
- Providing **logistical support** for spaces for the Sudanese diaspora to hold fundraisers and events as venue hire / rental costs can be prohibitive.

Social Media Analysis – findings

Shabaka also conducted a social media analysis aimed at understanding the main topics of discussion, sentiment and the potential influencers among the diaspora online concerning the crisis in Sudan.

The results showed that the many posts expressed **hope for a peaceful Sudan**, while some also expressed **anger, frustration, and distrust** towards the former regime and its allies, and also towards the international community.

The most discussed topics were the humanitarian situation, **evacuation and safe passage**, and the **urgent daily needs** of those still in areas of conflict and the borders.

The analysis also identified several influential accounts that had a high level of engagement and followership, showing a heightened level of advocacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the survey, KIs, and FGDs, Shabaka proposes the following recommendations to strengthen engagement of the Sudanese diaspora in humanitarian responses to the current crisis and in reconstruction and longer-term development in Sudan:

For IOM

- Create community engagement activities with the Sudanese diaspora to build relationships with diaspora organisations. Maintain these relationships through regular meetings and check-ins with community leaders.
- Work with humanitarian organisations to create safe passage for aid to reach impacted communities, especially communities outside of Khartoum
- Serve as UN focal point on Sudan crisis by sharing information on humanitarian needs in Sudan and increasing the visibility of Sudanese diaspora responses to the crisis with other UN bodies and institutional humanitarian partners. This information can also be used to advocate for Sudanese people at the international level.
- Work with the diaspora to share accurate and up to date information on eligibility and access to basic services for displaced Sudanese in neighbouring countries across community networks
- Develop structured pathways and programmes to enable diaspora organisations and diaspora volunteers to extend their support to

communities in Sudan, especially in terms of post-crisis reconstruction.

- Offer training and psychosocial support to displaced Sudanese to assist integration into host communities within Sudan and in neighbouring countries during the crisis
- Strengthen organisational capacity of diaspora humanitarians to provide humanitarian assistance during the crisis and support post-crisis reconstruction in Sudan

For Humanitarian Organisations

- Include vulnerable populations in relief efforts, including the elderly, children, people in rural areas outside of Khartoum
- Create mechanisms that give diaspora organisations the opportunity to directly engage with global humanitarian actors. This will allow diaspora organisations to learn more about how their work can align with the global humanitarian infrastructure and will also allow global humanitarian organisations to learn about diaspora humanitarian response directly from diaspora communities
- Work with diaspora organisations to provide support to local civil society partners and networks providing relief activities in Sudan and in neighbouring countries. This could include assistance in getting cash and relief supplies into Sudan, access to training, as well as financial support to diaspora humanitarians to enable them to scale up their humanitarian activities.
- Strengthen organisational capacity of diaspora humanitarians to provide humanitarian assistance during the crisis and support post-crisis reconstruction in Sudan
- Offer mental health support to Sudanese diaspora humanitarians

For Diaspora Organisations

- Work more intergenerationally: While there is some intergenerational engagement in relief activities, each generation within the Sudanese diaspora tends to operate independently of the others. The creation of a unified message and common goals can come from working cohesively across generations
- Recognise the work being done by non-traditional diaspora groups (i.e., university societies) and include them in broader diaspora community activities
- Recognise the impact of the crisis on the diaspora, both in terms of stress and trauma, and in terms of increased financial and other pressures on community members, who may need advice and signposting to appropriate sources of support (e.g. psychosocial support services, advice on benefits)
- Make use of upskilling opportunities that can support their humanitarian and development activities in Sudan, such as training in humanitarian certification or humanitarian principles.

