**Public Health Consequences of Sudan’s Crisis in the Face of Global Donor Fatigue**

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**Abstract**

The emergence of the crisis in Sudan has led to an overstretched healthcare system therein, which has negatively impacted the public health system of the nation. The WHO has noted the closure of roughly sixteen hospitals since the start of the conflicts due to staff safety concerns as well as a shortage of hospital supplies, consumables, and medication. Due to ongoing conflicts and persistent political instability, Sudan receives very little funding from donor organizations to maintain its healthcare system, which worsens the nation's general public health architecture. Thus, amidst the ongoing crisis recent floods in the country can further pose serious challenges like disease outbreaks, starvation, infectious diseases, deteriorating health infrastructure, and mental health issues. To successfully reduce the severity of negative impacts on public health, the crisis must be ceased and facilities reopened. A well-structured disease surveillance system for infectious diseases should be established, pregnant women and children under the age of five should be treated for free, and mental health awareness and examination should be prioritized. The global community must act expeditiously to mitigate the devastating effects of this crisis.

**Keywords**: Public Health, Crisis, Global Donor Fatigue, Sudan

Dear Editor,

Armed combat between opposing groups of Sudan's ruling military government broke out on April 15, 2023, resulting in at least 559 fatalities 1, and more than 4,000 injuries recorded 2. As the crisis worsens, the World Health Organization (WHO) regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean Office reported an attack on the medical staff, health facilities, and ambulances, exacerbating the public health crisis of the already constrained healthcare system of the nation 3. The expected effects of this crisis on the nation's healthcare system include disease outbreaks, starvation, deteriorating health infrastructure, and mental health issues, among others. Sudan is among the African nation with little external donations, possibly due to political instability and ongoing conflicts that have raised security concerns and deterred donor agencies from providing aid. The political unrest, coupled with a weak economy, and natural calamities, has further confounded the situation, resulting in a potential long-term public health crisis.

As the crisis in Sudan continues, the nation's healthcare infrastructure is at risk of collapse. The WHO has reported the closure of around sixteen hospitals, including nine in Khartoum and some others in Darfur state, due to a lack of hospital supplies, consumables, and medicine 3. Safety concerns for hospital staff further exacerbates the situation. The closure of hospitals will have a significant negative impact on access to existing facilities in the country, and the quality of care may be compromised due to a disproportional ratio of facilities or manpower to the population. The crisis will be especially acute in far-reaching areas, including rural areas.

The nexus of armed conflict and climate crisis frequently results in multifaceted negative health outcomes. Sudan recently experienced a flood that resulted in massive displacement of people and the destruction of over a thousand latrines and homes. Access to clean water and hygiene was compromised, resulting in high incidences of several diseases, including the Hepatitis E virus, Dengue fever, and Rift Valley fever in Sudan and neighboring South Sudan 4,5. Also, the WHO reports that the National Public Health Laboratory in Khartoum, Sudan was seized by fighters, leading to concerns about a significant biological risk. A medical source reported that the lab contained biological material and disease samples, this could result in the recirculation of diseases such as poliovirus, measles, cholera and more6. The current crisis, with the potential for the spread of infectious and non-infectious diseases, could devastate the country, worsen healthcare services, and pose a global health threat in the third-largest African nation by population.

Sudan has been facing a prolonged crisis, making it difficult to carry out daily activities. This has been further compounded by decades of social conflict and a weak economy with high inflation, leaving many citizens vulnerable to malnutrition, especially children under the age of five 7. The effects of food insecurity in Sudan are alarming and could have devastating impacts on children's health making them less able to resist childhood diseases 8. Mental health has also been significantly impacted by the ongoing crisis, resulting in population displacement and disconnection from loved ones, leading to constant distress and trauma, which can result in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder 8.

To address the negative impact of the conflict, peace is essential before rebuilding efforts can begin. The government should prioritize and reorganize regional health centers across all 18 states with well-equipped facilities, staff, and medical supplies, while also enacting comprehensive bye-laws to protect healthcare workers. A well-structured disease surveillance system is necessary to prepare for infectious disease outbreaks. The government should also focus on addressing malnutrition in children under five by providing dietary support, free healthcare for pregnant women and young children, and establishing special mental health facilities with trained personnel to address mental health issues caused by the ongoing crisis. Conflict and crisis, in any shape or form, are calamities that result from human actions. The sanctity of human life should be upheld by those in power. The ongoing crisis in Sudan is a challenging period for its people, and prompt action is necessary to prevent further deterioration of the nation's public health status, both in the present and in the long-term. The global community must act expeditiously to mitigate the devastating effects of this crisis.

**Conflict of interest:** none

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