

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

Sudan

Country Programme Strategy

2025 – 2029



Table of contents

Executive summary	1
1. About Norwegian Church Aid	2
1.1 Norwegian Church Aid Globally	2
1.2 Norwegian Church Aid in Sudan	2
1.3 Lessons learned.....	3
2. Sudan Context.....	4
2.1 National context	4
2.2 Civic space and role of civil society.....	6
3. Country vision and long-term goals.....	6
3.1 Country vision	6
3.2 Country-specific long-term goals.....	6
4. Geographical coverage	7
4.1 Selected geographic areas of engagement	7
4.2 Co-localisation and integrated programmes	8
5. Programme Focus	8
5.1 Save Lives	9
5.2 Build Resilience	10
5.4 Country Thematic Matrix.....	12
Outcome 2.1	12
Outcome 5.2	12
Outcome 4.3	12
Outcome 5.3	12
Outcome 4.4	12
5.5 Cross-cutting commitments	12
5.5 Knowledge management and data-driven programming	13
6. Equitable partnerships for a locally led development.....	13
6.1 Local leadership and participation	13
6.2 A relevant and complementary partnership portfolio	14
8. Map of geographical focus areas 2025-2029	17

Executive summary

This strategy for 2025-2029 considers the current context of Sudan, characterized by active war that has decimated Sudan's economy and caused massive displacement. There are concurrent humanitarian and development needs – an extreme need for life saving services alongside a strategic need for peace talks, conflict resolution, resilience building and transition to democracy. NCA Sudan has a solid foundation in its set up, expertise, positive reputation, partnerships, and network to design and implement integrated lifesaving and long-term projects that can contribute to holistically addressing these needs.

This strategy has assessed and built on lessons drawn from the and past, including setting geographic selection criteria for a volatile context, the importance of our contribution to building a resilient civil society by investing in capacity of our partners, the integration and co-localization of thematic programs, and risk management for an agile, responsive country program.

NCA Sudan is committed to complying with and upholding our values of promoting locally led, rights-based, faith-based, holistic, and complementary development activities that comply with our core humanitarian standards, which aim to ensure that our actions positively contribute to women's rights and gender equality, protection of the environment and sustainable peace.

NCA brings the unique value of working with grassroots and organic civil society, and value-based national organizations in designing relevant projects that change lives of millions of people in the Country. Our global alliance with faith-based organizations, through the Act alliance, and our reputation on the ground integrated programming by our partners, presents an opportunity for resource mobilization and complimentary impact at scale.

NCA Sudan seeks to see a Country that is a just, resilient, and thriving. NCA Sudan's long-term goals are aligned with and contributed to NCA's global long-term goals of saving lives, building resilience, and seeking justice. The Country office aims to contribute to these goals by implementing integrated and yet selected outcomes of Water Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH), Gender Based Violence (GBV) Food security and Economic Development, Fighting Inequality, and Environmental Stewardship programs that contribute to the short term live saving but also to building a resilient country that is thriving for peace, democratic transition, economic development.

Based on the current assessment NCA is committed to working in White Nile, Gedaref, Darfur, Khartoum, South, West, and Noth Kordofan States and potentially expand to Red Sea and Kassala states. Given the fluidity of the situation, presence in these areas will be determined based on set of criteria including knowledge of the area, accessibility, having embedded partners in the area complementing NCA's activities, alignment with donor goals, and the ability to make an impact.

In the strategic period (2020-2024), NCA implemented projects both through partners and directly. NCA has also established several organic community groups that closely work to plan, mobilize resources, and support each other at times of crises. The current crisis has shown the value of these organisations, and their ability to respond where and when INGOs cannot. Strengthening these civil society organizations as change agents is vital in achieving our long-term goals. Going forward, the Country office will focus on implementation through partners, and seek to invest in national partners' organizational capacity through direct funding aimed at their organizational development and sustainability, in line with NCA's global equitable partnership policy.

NCA Sudan will continue to build the quality of its internal systems and human capacities to ensure effective design, implementation, and quality management of its activities in the Country.

1. About Norwegian Church Aid

1.1 Norwegian Church Aid Globally

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is an independent humanitarian and diaconal organization mandated by churches in Norway to fight for a more just world together with our partners around the globe. Our mandate is to save lives, build resilience, and seek justice to uphold human dignity and protect the integrity of Creation. We provide humanitarian assistance and protection in disasters, work for sustainable development in local communities, promote peace and reconciliation, and address the root causes of poverty, advocating for the fulfilment of human rights and just decisions by public authorities, businesses, and religious leaders. NCA provides support to the most vulnerable and those in need, regardless of their ethnicity, creed, political or religious affiliation. NCA prioritizes working in long-term partnerships with local actors and organizations to enhance ownership and sustainability. As an organization certified against the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, NCA places accountability to the people and communities we serve at the centre of our work. Committed to international ecumenical cooperation and development effectiveness, NCA is affiliated with the World Council of Churches and is a member of the ACT Alliance. The ACT Alliance is a coalition of churches and affiliated organizations working together in over 140 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people.

1.2 Norwegian Church Aid in Sudan

NCA started operations in Greater Sudan in 1972 with a large multi-sectoral, operational program in Eastern Equatoria. Since then, NCA has worked to serve affected communities in Sudan through periods of civil war, civil and political unrest, coups, revolution, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Darfur Crisis in 2004 prompted an extensive emergency response by NCA. NCA also operated in the Nuba Mountains, in Greater Kordofan, until 2020 and responded to the Tigray refugee crisis in Gedaref in 2021. Between 2020-2024, NCA worked to consolidate its geographic footprint, and expanded its emergency response and long-term development activities to Gedaref, White Nile, and Khartoum states, as well as locations in Greater Kordofan, including South, North, and West Kordofan states, which allowed NCA to reach many more underserved populations in these geographic locations. Stakeholders, including donor agencies and embassies, respect NCA for its long history of responding to identified needs in Sudan; often in areas that are difficult to access.

NCA has designed and implemented emergency response and long-term development activities in the thematic areas of WASH, GBV (including SRH), Economic Empowerment, and Education. NCA designed and implemented its activities to respond to the complex realities faced by communities in Sudan, where humanitarian needs exist alongside long-term development needs. Access to basic life-saving services have always been needed just as much as participation in peace processes, building social cohesion, democratic transition, and empowering Sudanese women and men with the knowledge, skills, tools, and opportunities need to transform their lives. This has required NCA to design and implement projects that cut across our global purpose of saving lives, building resilience, and seeking justice.

NCA implemented several of its activities through national partners and have closely collaborated with Act Alliance members and other INGOs, such as Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, CAFOD, and UN agencies, including OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, and WFP. NCA Sudan has also built a good reputation with donors who supported its programs in Sudan, including Norad, MFA, RNE, Global Affairs Canada, Bureau of Humanitarian Aid (BHA) at USAID, and FCDO.

This strategic plan 2025-2029 considers the current context of Sudan. The conflict that broke out in Sudan in April 2023 has had devastating consequences. Like most national and international NGOs, NCA and its partners have lost assets and offices in Darfur and Khartoum. The war has made it

difficult for NCA and its partners to access communities for emergency response. The lack of safety and security, increasing bureaucratic and administrative impediments, destructive of infrastructure and production capacity, as well as early failures and impacts on the markets, financial system, and telecommunications all contributed to an extremely difficult and volatile operating environment for NCA, its partners, and other aid agencies working in Sudan – the consequences of which will be seen and felt well into, and beyond, the 2025-2029 strategic period.

Sudan is currently characterized by continued violence, a decimated economy, and massive displacement inside and out of Sudan. There is an extreme need for immediate life-saving services, and a strategic need for peacebuilding, conflict resolution, resilience building, and transition to democracy. NCA has a solid foundation in its organizational set-up, expertise, and network, based on which we can deliver integrated lifesaving and long-term projects that can contribute to holistically addressing the complex needs faced in the country.

NCA Sudan has proved a level of resilience in the face of the 2023 conflict, reset itself as an organization, supported its partners, and quickly continued to provide lifesaving emergency services to refugees and IDPs, and building resilience and supporting long-term community development activities where feasible. In fact, NCA used the opportunity to reassess its organizational set-up and introduced an organizational change process that will play key role for enhancing the sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness of the NCA Country office in Sudan.

In addition to our internal strengths, NCA has established strong relationships with grassroots community groups and national partners, as well as other like-minded INGOs, UN agencies, and donors in Sudan. NCA has a reputation for its on-the-ground capacity and integrated multisectoral programming in Sudan through local partners. The current circumstances forced a new clarity of purpose regarding NCA's partners – they can often operate where and when NCA cannot, and our aim should be to invest in their sustainability and capacity to do so.

While NCA aims to continue to implement its activities in Gedaref, White Nile, and Kordofan states, it will carefully weigh opportunities to expand to the Red Sea and Kassala states. NCA's operation in Darfur and Khartoum state will continue to exist in the strategic period, albeit with a stronger focus on implementation through our partners. NCA Sudan is committed to complying with and upholding our values of promoting locally led, rights-based, faith-based, holistic, and complementary development activities that comply with our core humanitarian standards, which aim to ensure that our actions positively contribute to women's rights and gender equality, protection of the environment, and reduction of conflict.

1.3 Lessons learned

This strategic plan draws on many lessons learnt from the implementation of the previous strategic plan 2021-2024, and other periods in NCA Sudan's long history, as briefly set out below.

Regarding geographic location, decisions on selection and duration of presence in a location should be based on thorough analysis of the availability of resources and the opportunity to create an impact line with NCA's values, principles, and operating modality. NCA Sudan has in the past been ambitious and stretched over several geographic locations. NCA's commitment to continue to serve the communities in some locations has not necessarily been supported by sufficient resources for program implementation. While NCA was able to reach beneficiaries in the hardest places, the remoteness of some of the project locations, without proper staff presence, has created a challenge for monitoring and evaluation of activities. That said, in a very fluid and dynamic operation environment such as Sudan, strategic plans should not aim to exhaustively list geographic locations where the country office should operate over a period; the strategic plan should rather set geographic selection criteria that CO leadership can use in making decisions about geographic

locations over a strategic plan period. A typical example is that Gedaref was not on the list of states where NCA aimed to work during the preceding strategic period. However, when the need arose in 2021, the CO decided to start operations in Gedaref state and that has resulted in attracting resources and creating impact for the neediest communities.

In 2021 and 2022, NCA Sudan undertook a fit-for-purpose initiative in Sudan that resulted in a revised organogram and a reduction of fewer staff. In addition to that, during the ongoing crisis that broke out in April 2023, NCA has taken steps to make its organizational structure lighter, and focus on partners' capacity development and sustainability, and this will continue through 2024. These steps should allow NCA to build and keep a reasonably sized and capable country program, compared to the funding the CO expects to secure while extending its reach through partners.

To strengthen civil society, NCA, both through direct implementation and by working with national partners, has been able to contribute to the development of several grassroots civil society groups such as WASH committees, community action groups for conflict resolution, natural resources management, farmers' associations, saving and loan associations, and mother-to-mother care groups. This has contributed to building organic community movements and active citizenship where marginalized groups have increased their capacity for meaningful participation in their own development and in demanding their rights from duty bearers. However, limited funding for partner capacity development and project-based partnership management approaches limited the ability of the Sudan Country Office to make more substantial investments in enhancing the sustainability and organizational capacities of national NGOs that could play a much greater role in yielding NCA'S global civil society outcomes at scale.

All over Sudan, there are overlapping needs that call for program integration, and thus co-localization. The Sudan CO has aimed to implement a minimum of two thematic areas in any geographic location targeting the same communities and has co-localized its program interventions with other agencies, enhancing impact and reach. NCA has also been recognized by the donors for its integrated program approach. Three factors that play a critical role in upholding the nexus approach are (i) capable expertise that can comprehend the nexus approach in action, (ii) data-driven programming that enables analyses of how different needs in the same household/community can help in designing an integrated project, and (iii) donors that understand the needs, and are willing to fund and advocate for such integrated programs.

Thematically, several key lessons learned about the most effective approaches used in the past years lay a solid foundation for the coming strategic period. Some of these include solarized water facilities, Total Community Led Sanitation and Hygiene (TCLSH), Community Action Groups for natural resources management and DRR (GAC), saving and loan associations, community seed banks, mother-to-mother care group models, community-based nutrition, girls, and women safe spaces, integrated psychosocial support, and protection for survivors of violence.

In terms of risk management, the lessons from the breakout of the war in Sudan in April 2023, and thus its consequences on NCA and its operation, are that: NCA has an opportunity to strengthen its risk management capacity by having robust yet pragmatic risk management plan and position itself as a resilient first responder in such a fragile environment. As an international organization, working through local partners and strengthening the capacities of national staff is crucial to ensure access to communities for the continuation of program operations even in times of crisis.

2. Sudan Context

2.1 National context

Sudan is one of the signatories of the Sustainable Development Goal 2023. SDG 2030 is a key global

commitment to upholding human rights. There are nine goals (Goal 1 on ending poverty; Goal 2 on zero hunger; Goal 3 on good health and wellbeing; Goal 4 on quality education; Goal 5 on gender equality; Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation; Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth; Goal 10 on reduced inequalities; and Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions) presented in the SDG 2023 analytical framework. The goals were selected in line with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). NCA, along with other humanitarian and development partners in Sudan, has been working to contribute to these goals through the implementation of its programs. However, the SDG progress report published in June 2023, showed that Sudan stood off-track to achieving SDG goals ranking 160 out of 166 Countries with SDG index score of 48.6.¹

Since mid-April 2023, Sudan has been gripped in a brutal conflict with devastating social, economic, and political consequences. This war and its consequences will mark the future of Sudan and NCA's operation in the country for years to come. This war pits the Sudanese Armed Forces, under General Abdel Fattah Al Burhan, against the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary force led by Burhan's deputy General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, popularly known as Hemedti. While the timing of the outbreak of the war may have caught many people unaware, it was not entirely unexpected. It had been in the making since the removal from power of the country's former leader Omar al Bashir through a popular uprising in 2019. The conflict is further complicated by secondary ethnic and communal conflicts and the presence of several other armed groups. The current conflict has destroyed Khartoum, Nyala, and many other cities around the country, and resulted in the displacement of more than 7 million people who fled to safety in and outside of the country. This possibly puts the country at its lowest capacity to achieve SDG 2030.

Today, the financial system, which was already burdened with international sanctions, has nearly collapsed, with only some banks operating at extremely low capacity. Exacerbated poverty significantly decreased production, and disruption of supply to the country has led to skyrocketing inflation, and millions of Sudanese facing serious acute food and nutrition insecurity. All of this is compounded by a near-total collapse of the healthcare and education systems, severe disruption of communications, destruction of infrastructure, protracted conflict over resources, and worsened environmental degradation.

Rights deficits include poor governance and the existence of parallel governance structures, lack of rule of law with a collapsed judicial system, curtailed civil rights, diminished civic space, and weakened capacity of civil society, and lack of knowledge on human rights and rights to basic services such as water and health. With prolonged war that is devastating families, causing displacement and trauma, there is an increased rate of gender-based violence, while traditional harmful practices such as female genital mutilation continue to affect the people of Sudan, especially women, girls, and marginalized communities. Many states and societies in Sudan are fragmented and seeing increased conflict along tribal and ethnic lines. These factors have resulted in an extremely high need for humanitarian aid across the country especially in states where there is an increasing influx of internally displaced communities.

In the 2025-2029 strategic period, it is expected that the need for humanitarian aid and supporting conflict resolution mechanisms will remain among the key humanitarian priorities in the country. However, it is to be expected that there will be increased challenges to implementation, including impediments and restrictions by ruling groups, limited access to some communities, increased risk of insecurity and safety to humanitarian workers, among others.

Despite the challenges, the people of Sudan have remained resilient and there are many current and potential future engagements with Sudanese civil society in locally led response and, eventually,

¹ <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters/part-2-the-sdg-index-and-dashboards>

reconstruction and development. Many civil society organizations, youth-, women-, and men-led volunteer groups have organized themselves to respond to the emergency needs of their communities affected by the war. This has opened the opportunity to work directly with communities and to help them develop their response and recovery mechanisms and structures. Many donors have also continued their commitment to support Sudanese people through national and international INGOs. Humanitarian aid organizations have continued to advocate for access and safety for humanitarian workers. The current challenge Sudan is going through also paves a way for ratification of conventions, rules, policies, and peace agreements.

2.2 Civic space and role of civil society

Compared to the former regime, and prior to the war in April 2023, there has been slight improvement in freedom of expression, assembly, and association which allowed for the CSOs, FBOs and NGOs to engage more actively and provide the space for the right holders and community to claim their rights. Volunteer groups, professional associations (such as the associations and professional bodies for doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, and journalists) are emerging as important, trusted civil society voices.

However, since the war broke out, civic space is negatively affected as capacities of formal civil society groups such as national NGOs have significantly reduced. There is hardly any functioning government and judiciary system that allows civil society to effectively hold duty bearers to account. Other than social media, which is increasingly under scrutiny, there is no platform for civil society to advocate for peace, rights, and rule of law. Scrutiny and reprisals by the warring parties also poses a threat for civil society leaders to engage in any meaningful advocacy.

However, at grassroots level, there are still many relevant entry points for organic community-based bottom-up advocacy, including the emergency rooms, community conversation groups, community action groups for natural resource management and conflict resolution, farmers’ associations, mother-to-mother nutrition support groups, saving and loan associations, functioning women’s groups and WASH committees. Faith-based organizations and leaders continue to have acceptance by the community, presenting opportunity for the delivery of basic service and to support community-led initiatives. The existence and influence of these civil society groups can also play a key role as entry points and vehicles for building leaders’ capacities as change agents that can initiate and take part in peace talks, advocate for rights of minority groups, mediate conflicts at community level, and to continue to increase communities’ awareness of their rights.

3. Country vision and long-term goals

3.1 Country vision

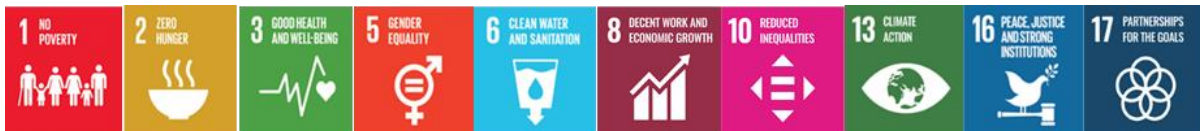
A Just, Resilient, and Thriving Sudan

3.2 Country-specific long-term goals

	NCA global long-term goals	Country programme long-term goals
Save Lives	Vulnerable and displaced people are protected, access life-saving services, and practice skills that enhance their personal safety, health, and well-being.	Vulnerable and affected people are protected, access life-saving services, and practice skills that enhance their personal safety, health, and well-being.
Build Resilience	Inclusive and cohesive communities withstand and recover from shocks and crises, manage their	Communities across Sudan are inclusive and cohesive, and can recover from and withstand shocks and crises,

	resources sustainably and equitably, and lift themselves out of poverty.	manage their resources sustainably and equitably, and lift themselves out of poverty
Seek Justice	Civil society actors hold national and international decision-makers accountable and influence progressive policy, norm changes, and more equitable distribution of resources.	Civil society actors hold national and international decision-makers accountable; participate in peace-building processes; and influence progressive policy making and implementation, and equitable distribution of resources.

While these long-term goals are aligned with and contribute to achieving 2030 goals, during the strategic period, NCA in Sudan aims to specifically contribute to the SDG goals shown below.



4. Geographical coverage

4.1 Selected geographic areas of engagement

Learning from its past experiences, and given the uncertain situation in Sudan, NCA plans to annually review the geographic locations it will operate in. Determining factors for the selection of geography shall be (i) knowledge of the area, (ii) accessibility (communication, safe access routes), (iii) embedded partners in the area complementing NCA’s activities, (iv) supporting governance structures/authorities in place, including community leaders or authorities, (v) acceptance from the community, (vi) prioritized needs alignment with NCA goals and values, (vii) the opportunity for making impact, and (viii) donor alignment. Based on the current assessment, below is the list of geographies where NCA aims to work:

Darfur (South and Central Darfur States): Both states are states where NCA has been operational since the Darfur war in 2003. After the recent war in Sudan, NCA has continued operating only in Central Darfur implementing KFW/WFP-funded resilience activities that will potentially go beyond the current strategic period. The needs in these states have always been high, and the need for both humanitarian response and resilience building has further increased with the current war.

Kassala State: This is a new geographic location for NCA. The state is currently accessible for humanitarian operations. Although NCA is not currently operating in the state, NCA partner SOS Sahel is present, providing a potential entry point. The state has geographic proximity to NCA’s ongoing program areas in East Sudan. Given the influx of IDPs in the areas, and the already existing economic and social challenges, the need for humanitarian intervention remains very high. This is noticed by some donors, which presents opportunities for fund mobilization.

White Nile: NCA is currently operational in White Nile state through its partners. There is a huge population of IDPs and refugees in this state, and NCA also has staff present in Kosti. NCA and partners, including ERRADA, NUWEDA, DDRA, SOS Sahel, and Mutawinat are present in the state.

Red Sea: This is a new geographic location for NCA for the implementation of activities. However, after the current war broke out in Khartoum, NCA established a liaison office in the state capital, Port Sudan. NCA partners, SOS Sahel and ERRADA, also have offices in the state. Port Sudan is both accessible and a key logistical and safety access point. Geographic proximity to NCA’s ongoing programs, high population of IDPs and thus high need present opportunity for impact.

Gedaref: NCA has had an operational office in the state from 2021 with ongoing projects. NCA partners, including RCDO, the University of Gedaref, and SOS Sahel, are present in the state. There is

a high population of refugees and IDPs, and very high need in the host community. NCA's established operational office and visible presence give an opportunity for resource mobilization.

Khartoum: NCA has been operational in Khartoum state for many years. Amidst the war, NCA has been able to implement an emergency response project through its partner SUDO. Khartoum has opportunities for many high-impact economic and social projects when accessible. It has a high population of IDPs and for the strategic period, being part of the reconstruction of the capital city and supporting returning communities to recover from shocks will be of great need for the country.

Greater Kordofan (South and North Kordofan States): Kordofan is characterized by a very high need of host communities, IDPs, and refugees. NCA is operational in these states through partners (DDRA and SOS Sahel) during the last strategic period. The accessibility of certain areas within the states varies as conflict lines shift.

4.2 Co-localisation and integrated programmes

The Sudan Country office will co-localize program activities in three ways:

- (i) In areas where NCA directly implements activities, it will plan and implement multisectoral and integrated program activities that can complement each other to yield better results. This includes seeking out complementary funding.
- (ii) In areas where NCA implements projects through partners, it encourages partners to design and implement multi-sectoral programs and localize complementing programme activities, and/or to encourage collaboration between different partners with complementary strengths.
- (iii) NCA will seek better coordination with other stakeholders through active participation in the INGO Forum and sectoral clusters to leverage resources implemented by other agencies in the same geographic locations.

NCA Sudan is committed to continuing to implement a triple nexus program where lifesaving activities take place, as entry points to build resilience and gradually transform to systems development. This will enable the CO to meaningfully contribute to saving lives, restoring peace in Sudan, and facilitating a transition to a democratic state. The effects of the current conflict will likely endure well into, if not beyond the 2025-2029 strategic period, and require lifesaving emergency/humanitarian response activities while continuing to build capacities, support production, and productive investments by farmers and the private sector in areas where it is practical. The CO will continue to implement these initiatives, while building community and civil society capacities and their networks that enable communities to maintain social cohesion and reduce further fragmentation; recover from shocks and engage in meaningful conflict resolution. Once peace is restored, the CO focus will be on supporting IDPs to return to their homes and rebuild assets, infrastructure, and services to a point where emergency response activities gradually reduce, and resilience-building activities increase over time. Long-term development activities such as addressing strategic challenges related to rights, democracy, production, markets, infrastructure, and systems development will continue to be an integral part of the CO programs where feasible and gradually become priorities as the country settles into peace. At that stage, while resilience building and long-term development gradually become core priorities, emergency response activities will start to shrink.

5. Programme Focus

In working to achieve our long term goals, the CO response strategy will be anchored in NCA's ethical commitments, including the Humanitarian Principles.² Our response will be guided by NCA's policies and guidance documents, including the NCA Humanitarian Strategy, NCA Sudan's Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP), and adhere to Sphere standards, including the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Humanitarian Principles. The strategic approach will further participatory and conflict-sensitive approaches (including participatory planning, conflict analyses, multi-sectoral needs assessment, and community conversation models) to ensure that interventions are relevant to the needs on the ground, and that local knowledge is integrated into the solution provided by projects and impacts are sustainable in the fragile environment the CO is operating in. As such, any response will be based on (i) risk-informed decision-making, (ii) community participation and empowerment, (iii) multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration, (iv) adaptivity and flexibility, and (v) sustainability.

5.1 Save Lives

Long-term goal: Vulnerable and affected people are protected, access life-saving services, and practice skills that enhance their personal safety, health, and well-being.

5.1.1 What we want to change and for whom

Women, men, children, and elderly people in almost all corners Sudan are affected by the current war, with over 10 million people having been displaced from their homes. These people often do not have access to basic life-sustaining services such as shelter, food, water, clothing, sanitation tools and services, psychosocial support, and health services, among others. The host communities that are receiving IDPs – particularly in the eastern part of Sudan – are overwhelmed with already extremely limited services. There are increasing rates of deadly outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and cholera. Recent reports show that, during the war, GBV cases have increased significantly. These situations are even worse in Darfur because of the lack of access to humanitarian services in the states. These people and those who seek refuge in neighbouring Countries as well as those who bear the consequence of the war are deprived of their basic rights to food, shelter, health, gender equality, and the right to thrive for better economic opportunities all against the SDG 2030 rights-based goals described under section 2. This situation dictates the current critical need for saving lives and will also have significant implications for the next five years as well.

5.1.2 What we will do to achieve the change.

NCA Sudan aims to save the lives of women, men, children, and elderly people who are affected by crises by providing integrated WASH, food security, and GBV services. The NCA GBV services include GBV case management and providing women and girls with safe spaces, distribution of dignity kits, psychosocial support, emergency sexual and reproductive health services (including community education), supporting coordination of referral systems focusing on mothers and children health. These services will be integrated with emergency response WASH activities such as emergency water supply and maintenance of water facilities, water treatment, distribution of water containers, the establishment of emergency sanitation facilities, as well as supporting affected communities in waste management. Where possible, NCA will provide sustainable water services in the IDP and refugee camps. Food security activities will also target the same communities with activities, including the distribution of emergency food and non-food items and the provision of multipurpose cash as a priority. In the provision of these services and goods, NCA will focus on enhancing awareness through training and mass education, and leverage partnership and coordination with national and international humanitarian sector stakeholders, including capable local private sector

² <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/humanitarian-principles> .

food and input suppliers and financial institutions, to achieve impact at scale. Such timely responses help crisis-affected communities meet their immediate basic needs, alleviate suffering, and protect women, girls, and other marginalized communities from abuse and violence.

Primary thematic area(s)	Primary outcome areas	Supporting outcome area(s)
Gender Based Violence	Outcome 1.3, Outcome 1.4	Outcome 1.1 Outcome 2.4 Outcome 4.4
Climate- Resilient WASH	Outcome 4.2, Outcome 4.3	
Economic Development and Food Security	Outcome 5.3	

5.2 Build Resilience

Long-term goal: Communities across Sudan are inclusive and cohesive and can recover from and withstand shocks and crises, manage their resources sustainably and equitably, and lift themselves out of poverty.

5.2.1 What we want to change and for whom

Sudan is vulnerable to both human-made and natural disasters. Environmental degradation and thus degradation of natural resources create competition over water and land for farming and grazing, and forest is one of the major causes of conflict at the grassroots level. Erratic rainfalls, drought, floods, and the consequent displacement and outbreaks of human and animal diseases occur at least once every two years, affecting many lives and livelihoods. The ongoing war and the impact of the historic Darfur war are expected to keep parts of Sudan under continuous, tribal conflict for years and social unrest resulting in fragile social connection, weak rule of law, and lack of democratic governance in the Country. While these affect the entire Sudan, women, children, and marginalized communities bear the burden of the shock, and lack of basic services, livelihoods, and basic human and democratic rights.

5.2.2 What we will do to achieve the change.

Thematically, NCA Sudan will implement integrated CR WASH, GBV, EDFs, and peacebuilding activities that enhance individual, community, and systems development. WASH activities will include the construction of sustainably powered water facilities, hygiene promotion and sanitation, and establishment and capacity building of WASH committees. These activities will be integrated with EDFs activities, including livelihood training, introduction and expansion of improved and climate-smart agricultural production, value addition, and marketing skills, enhancing entrepreneurial skills through collaboration with the private sector. These activities will also be integrated with community-based nutrition initiatives that improve consumption, mobilization, and organization of communities' natural resource management, and the establishment of community-based early warning systems, disaster risk management action groups, and supporting communities in development and implementation of natural resource and disaster risk management plans. NCA will pursue partnership with the private sector as input suppliers and for output marketing, value addition, and providing financial services. Under the GBV thematic areas, CO will implement capacity building, leadership, and community behavioural and practice transformation activities that empower women and girls to increase their confidence/agency to participate in the public sphere and claim their rights. As part of helping communities to recover from the current shock and building resilience, NCA Sudan will implement activities that promote social cohesion and peace in the country. These activities include the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services, social cohesion activities by facilitating community conversation, training, and supporting different

interest groups on peacebuilding, in planning and implementing mutually beneficial community actions. This will hold up people’s ability to choose their destiny and be active citizens.

Primary thematic area(s)	Primary outcome areas	Supporting outcome area(s)
Gender Based Violence	Outcome 1.1	Outcome 2.2
Peacebuilding	Outcome 2.1	
Climate- Resilient WASH	Outcome 4.1, Outcome 4.3, Outcome 4.4	
Economic Development and Food Security	Outcome 5.1, Outcome 5.2	
Climate and Environmental Stewardship	Outcome 6.1, Outcome 6.2	

5.3 Seek Justice

Long-term goal: Civil society actors hold national and international decision-makers accountable; participate in peace-building processes; and influence progressive policymaking and implementation, and equitable distribution of resources.

5.3.1 What we want to change and for whom

The people of Sudan have been in a continuous struggle for democratic and civil government and against dictatorship, gross inequality, injustices, conflict over scarce natural resources, and gender discrimination. Civil society groups and organizations have been working hard to organize and catalyse this process. However, the space for civil society and democratic voices is shrinking from time to time. Politicization and scrutinization of civil society leaders and misinformation undermine civil society’s work to promote human rights and democracy.

5.3.2 What we will do to achieve the change

During the strategic period, while continuing to save lives and building resilience, NCA will work to improve Sudan’s people's access to justice mainly through the implementation of peacebuilding and GBV interventions. The activities include grassroots capacity development in civic education, advocacy skills, organizing, mobilizing grassroots civil society initiatives, advocating with lawmakers and stakeholders for social norms change, conducting community conversations, and training and facilitation of peace dialogue at the community level. By doing so, NCA will enhance the capacity of citizens and civil society to meaningfully take part in dialogues and peace talks at local, national, and international levels. As issues in the African context often transcend national borders, the Sudan country program will link up and coordinate closely with the NCA Joint Africa Advocacy Programme (JAAP) to ensure rooted advocacy on relevant issues related to Gender Justice, Peacebuilding, Fighting Inequalities and Faith-based Climate and Environment Advocacy. These interventions will contribute to the realization of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security and the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security.

Primary thematic area(s)	Primary outcome areas	Supporting outcome area(s)
Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	Outcome 1.2	Outcome 1.1
Peacebuilding (PB)	Outcome 2.3	
Fighting Inequality (FI)	Outcome 3.1, Outcome 3.2	

5.4 Country Thematic Matrix

Gender-Based Violence	Peacebuilding	Fighting Inequality	Climate-Resilient WASH	Economic Development and Food Security	Climate and Environmental Stewardship
Outcome 1.1	Outcome 2.1	Outcome 3.1	Outcome 4.1	Outcome 5.1	Outcome 6.1
Outcome 1.2	Outcome 2.3	Outcome 3.2	Outcome 4.2	Outcome 5.2	Outcome 6.2
Outcome 1.3			Outcome 4.3	Outcome 5.3	
Outcome 1.4			Outcome 4.4		

5.5 Cross-cutting commitments

Women’s rights and gender equality

NCA Sudan aligns with NCA’s global obligation to promote and protect the rights of women and girls to live their lives free from violence and discrimination, attain the highest psychosocial well-being possible, and have control over their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health. The GBV thematic area of the country office aims to work towards the empowerment of women and girls, enhancing their awareness knowledge, and skills; supporting them to strengthen their individual and collective resources and capacities, and promoting their decision-making and participation opportunities. NCA will develop and implement women’s rights and gender mainstreaming guidelines that ensure all thematic area initiatives identify and uphold women and girls’ rights as well as gender equality throughout the design, implementation and evaluation, and reporting. By focusing on program implementation these GBV, PB, and Humanitarian Response interventions, NCA Sudan will be contributing to the Women’s Peace and Security agenda.

Protection of the environment

Aligned with NCA’s global commitment, the Sudan CO is committed to contributing to halting environmental degradation, reducing plastic use through an integrated approach of creating green jobs, supporting the adoption of sustainable agriculture and livestock production systems, and protecting the natural environment, helping communities in adapting to rising risks and promoting community-based natural resource governance. NCA will undertake environmental risk screening and risk mitigation for NCA projects using humanitarian-oriented tools such as the NEAT+ at the project design phase particularly for WASH and EDFs interventions.

Conflict sensitivity

NCA’s program in Sudan is designed and implemented using participatory approaches such as community conversation and participatory planning tools that engage communities throughout the design and implementation process. The country office will conduct conflict analyses to generate rigorous knowledge of the people and the social and political dynamics to ensure that our activities do not instigate or intensify conflicts, and rather seek to reduce tensions and establish frameworks to ensure security, participation, and social cohesion. Adaptive management approaches allow NCA to monitor how activities impact relationships between different interest groups, learn from processes of implementation of activities, and adjust as needed so that NCA, its partner interventions, and investments do no harm and positively contribute to reducing conflict and tensions.

5.5 Knowledge management and data-driven programming

NCA Sudan has developed robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning guidelines that is in line with NCA's global commitment of using evidence and learning to inform its programming and better achieve its goals. The CO will ensure every grant and project has a result framework and MEAL plan and that those are followed through to ensure that evidence is generated to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions, and document and share lessons from the implementation of programs. The CO will actively participate in NCA global and regional thematic hubs, communities of practice, trainings, and workshops that will help share the experiences accumulated across NCA and our partners. NCA Sudan continues strengthening partnerships with academia, research institutions other aid organizations, in Sudan and the region which will allow us to incorporate the latest available evidence and best practices in our work.

NCA Sudan aims to have annual learning agendas where NCA and its partners (including academia and research institutes) will document lessons on specific agendas (approaches, methodologies, or leadership and management practices) that result in significant impact. These lessons shall be shared in the annual learning event where key lessons are shared within NCA and with partners. NCA Sudan will work to increase the representation of national organizations in the different national forums such as thematic cluster meetings in a way connecting them to shared knowledge and resources.

NCA Sudan office will continue to build its capacity to utilize NCA digital platforms, such as PIMS, for stronger data and knowledge management. These platforms will be utilized as a virtual office platform where all country program data is stored allowing virtual access to grants, projects, and country office information.

6. Equitable partnerships for a locally led development

6.1 Local leadership and participation

Localization is at the centre of NCA's core principles and partnership policy. NCA is also a signatory to the Charter for Change and its eight commitments.³ In the preceding strategic period (2020-2024), NCA implemented activities in a mixed approach, where the majority of NCA activities were direct operation projects implemented by NCA's staff. There were also a handful of national implementing partners that have a long history of working with NCA in Sudan, almost all of which are accompanied partners. NCA has also contributed to the establishment of informal grassroots civil society organizations that actively work to plan, mobilize resources, and support each other at times of crises such as the one going on in Sudan. Many leaders have emerged out of these movements.

During the ongoing crisis in Sudan, NCA and other international aid agencies in Sudan have attested to the added value of these national civic organizations in quickly responding to the emergency needs of the people.

During this new strategic period, NCA Sudan will build and strengthening our mutual and equitable partnership in Sudan in two ways.

Strengthening National Faith and Value-based Partners: NCA Sudan recognizes that its relationship with faith and value-based national partners is contractual. Thus, those organizations are mainly used as vehicles for the implementation of activities. They were provided with funding that is earmarked for implementation of activities and little to non for organizational development. There has been very limited investment made to meaningfully build their capacities. Thus, national

³ <https://charter4change.org/>

partners have remained predominately dependent on NCA funding with limited project designing, resource mobilization, implementation, and reporting capacity.

During the ongoing crisis, NCA has taken steps to make its organizational structure lighter and focus on partners' capacity development (through hands-on and on-the-ground support) and this will continue through 2024. Going forward, the Country office will seek to primarily invest in national partners' capacity to support, encourage, and accompany our local partners to play an increasingly prominent role in creating lasting change. To this end, NCA Sudan will increase direct funding for partners and thus reduce direct implementation. In all possible means, NCA will mobilize and allocate core funds for partners for organizational development. NCA would like to establish long-term partnerships, with selected accompanied national partners where national partners will commit to clear paths and milestones for organizational capacity development. The annual project agreements will be tied to performances, of achieving milestones set for the year. Through this process, partners will continue to enter into project agreements for the implementation of activities but also be treated more like a project where they will lead their own process of undertaking strategic plans and organizational diagnosis, develop organizational plans, and implement. This is aligned with NCA's global equitable partnership policy. NCA will invest in mentoring and coaching partners. In 2023, NCA introduced an approach whereby NCA staff are either seconded to or work from partners' offices, to facilitate accompaniment as a way of building local partner staff capacities. NCA has also established a leadership platform for senior leadership NCA and local partners. The aim of this forum is for leaders of the organizations and NCA to meet regularly to discuss progress of projects and other strategic issues, such as capacity development. NCA will build inhouse staff capacity to meaningfully lead this process.

The Country office will continue to work with the Head Office team to ensure result frameworks include indicators that help to capture changes in terms of organizational capacity, reasonable resources are allocated for these initiatives, evidence is generated along the way, and lessons are documented and shared for learning.

Strengthen organic civil society movement: NCA Sudan will seek to identify potential grassroots civil society groups among those established by NCA and other partners and create opportunities to support the development and implementation of civil society-led plans that enhance their capacities as a strong organic civil society with a meaningful voice in peace talks and transition to democracy in Sudan. These organic civil society groups will also play a vital role in partnering with NCA and other partners in leading community-owned development to address practical needs (such as access to basic services, improving their economy, and strengthening social cohesion) of their constituencies.

6.2 A relevant and complementary partnership portfolio

NCA Sudan will follow a strict yet pragmatic approach to identifying partners. The ideal NCA partner in Sudan will: be a right-based, faith-based, and/or value-based organization with basic organizational capacity to deliver outputs and outcomes, have certain alignment and compatibility with NCA goals and values, and be locally rooted in the communities with clear constituencies and vision.

These civil society partners will be leaders and agents of change in the community by creating platforms where community voices can be heard, and communities establish network to have meaningful participation and stake in economic, social, and political matters that affect their lives. They will also be vehicles for emergency response in crises that enable NCA to be quick responders to emergency breakouts.

Others are resource partners that have expertise, power, or other unique capacities such as technology, innovation, and resources) and that NCA Sudan will leverage on. NCA will help cooperate with these expert organizations, research institutions, and private sector partners that add value to NCA and civil society organizations' efforts. This enables us to bring in additional resources and expertise to enhance the organizational development process and other activities of faith-based partners and civil society organizations. NCA Sudan had started collaborating with private companies and universities in developing business models that increase opportunities for green jobs such as through the production of paper bags and, the introduction of climate-smart production practices such as micro irrigation. These initiatives have been interrupted by the war, but NCA will explore opportunities to reinstate and build on these and similar initiatives.

NCA Sudan will continue to collaborate with other international NGOs, UN agencies, and donors. NCA will continue to be active in INGO forum, UN agency platforms, and sector-specific cluster forums. These will allow NCA to ensure complementarity, avoid duplication, and nurture necessary relationships that help to mobilize and leverage resources for impact at scale.

7. Country Theory of Change



NCA Sudan Theory of Change (2025-2029)

THE SITUATION

- Protracted conflict
- Poor governance,
- lack of rule of law and collapsed judiciary systems,
- lack of knowledge on basic human rights.
- Lack of rights to basic services
- limited freedom of movement,
- weak capacity of the civil society,
- diminished space for civil society
- high gender-based violence and HTPs
- Exacerbated poverty,
- food and nutrition insecurity,
- inflation, market breakdown
- lack of communication,
- environmental degradation

CHANGE AGENTS

- Grassroots civil society groups
- National NGOs
- Forums such as thematic clusters

Equitable partnerships

CHANGE AGENTS

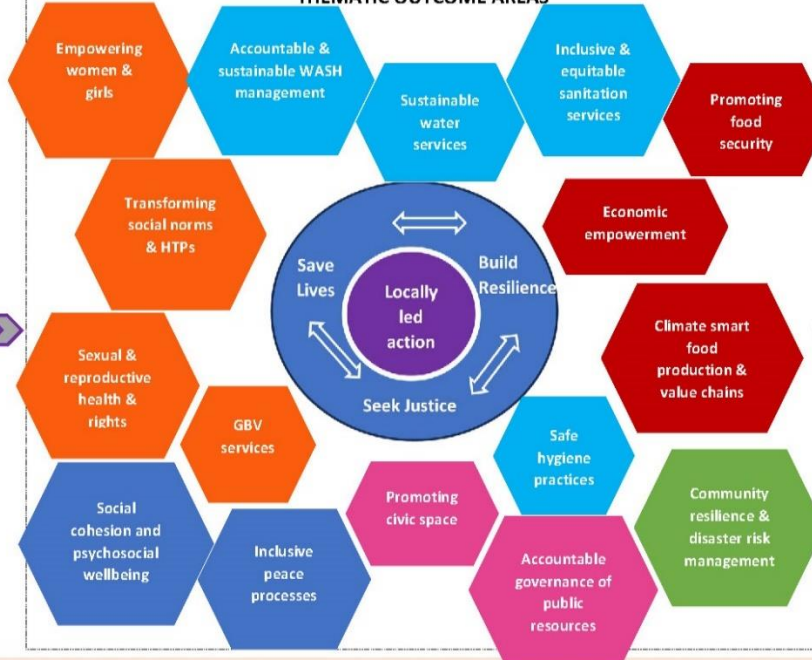
- Faith and other opinion leaders
- Academia and research institutes
- INGOs, UN agencies and donors

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Faith-based to inspire change and mobilize faith assets for change / *Locally led* for participative, legitimate, and relevant interventions / *Holistic and complementary* for integrated and coordinated nexus approach / *Rights-based* to empower rights-holders and address rights deficits.

VISION
A just, resilient, and thriving Sudan.

THEMATIC OUTCOME AREAS



*Resilient communities
*Space for civic action

- LONG TERM GOALS:**
- ***SAVE LIVES:** Vulnerable and affected people are protected, access life-saving services, and practice skills that enhance their personal safety, health, and well-being.
 - ***BUILD RESILIENCE:** Communities across Sudan are inclusive and cohesive, and can recover from and withstand shocks and crises, manage their resources sustainably and equitably, and lift themselves out of poverty.
 - ***SEEK JUSTICE:** Civil society actors hold national and international decision-makers accountable; participate in peace-building processes; and influence progressive policy making and implementation, and equitable distribution of resources.

NEXUS APPROACH: Integrated programming spearheaded by local communities and civil society

METHODS & APPROACHES

Timely humanitarian response, protection of civilians, stopping violence and facilitating dialogue and community conversation, nexus programming and thematic integration, co-localization and partners as projects, humanitarian advocacy, safe motherhood, water, sanitation, and hygiene, organization of organic community action groups, food security, community-based disaster risk management, GBV prevention and response.

ASSUMPTIONS:

- Sudan remains one Country; the ongoing war will end, and peace processes will start; there will be a space for civil society and INGOs to contribute to peace talks and democratic transition.
- Institutional donors will continue to fund NCA global objectives and thus that of the CO.
- Donors in Sudan will continue to operate in the Country.
- Access to communities for humanitarian and emergency response will continue to be possible.
- There will be a global commitment to the allocation of core funds for civil society capacity development.
- NCA and partners will continue to maintain optimal capacity in designing and managing projects.

EVIDENCE AND LEARNING

- *Impact evaluations
- *External project evaluations
- *Monitoring and feedback
- *Communities of practice
- *Sectoral and cross-sectoral clusters
- *Learning documentation and sharing
- *Trainings
- *Review workshops

ADJUSTMENTS FOR INCREASED IMPACT

8. Map of geographical focus areas 2025-2029

NCA Sudan Geographical Focus Areas 2025-2029

