

STATE PROFILE / BLUE NILE



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KEY FACTS



40 per cent of children under-five suffer from stunting and **9.5 per cent** of children suffer from wasting (S3M survey, 2018)



57.7 per cent of school-aged children (5-13 years old) are out-of-school



110,000 children under-five have not been vaccinated against preventable diseases



57 per cent of the population has no access to basic sanitation



46 per cent of the population has no access to basic water

SITUATION IN BLUE NILE

Demography¹

The population of Blue Nile state is slightly more than 1.3 million people, including many internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are 550,000 children (aged 0-18) in the Blue Nile, the average family size is five and the average population density is 21 people per square kilometer. With more than half of the population being below 24 years of age, Blue Nile is one of the youngest states in Sudan.

Blue Nile State is divided into seven localities: Damazine (317,906 inhabitants), Al Kurmuk (165,618 inhabitants), Roseires (211,760 inhabitants), At-Tadamon (116,078 inhabitants), Bau (190,182 inhabitants), Wad al Mahi (110,831 inhabitants), and Geisan (131,547 inhabitants). The annual population growth rate is 2.8 percent.

Almost three-quarters of the population lives in rural areas. The main tribes are Fung in Geissan; Berta, Uduk, Maban and Ganza in Kurmuk; Ingessana in Bau; Gomozand Kadalo in Roseires. Kurmuk and Geissan localities share tribal linkages with Bani Shanqul in Ethiopia.

Refugees: 12,995

Blue Nile state shares borders with two conflict-affected countries (Ethiopia and South Sudan). The state currently hosts 5,421 refugees from South Sudan who fled to Sudan after the separation of South Sudan and the subsequent civil war, with the majority of them staying in the border regions. In addition, and due to socio-political instability in Ethiopia, around 8,305 Ethiopian refugees - mainly from Gumuz and Tigray regions - recently crossed the border to Sudan. One camp in Wad el Mahi locality hosts 1,971 Ethiopian refugees, with the remaining 6,000 staying in informal settlements in the border area.

IDPs: 81,640

Conflict and other crises (floods and disease outbreaks) are considered the main contributing factors to displacement in Blue Nile state. The IDPs share basic social services with their host communities in all seven localities of the state, yet the majority settled in Damazine and Roseires towns.

Returnees: 9,702

With changing conflict zones and shifting front lines, tens of thousands of people decided to return to their location of origin. However, security is tenuous, and returnees often lack access to basic services in their communities, with infrastructure being destroyed or neglected in hard-to-reach or abandoned areas.

Vulnerable residents: 333,537

More than 333,537 people in Blue Nile state live in areas hosting refugees, IDPs, or returnees. The additional burden on the already overstretched social services makes these communities extra vulnerable.

¹ HNO 2022

Geography

Blue Nile is located in southeast of Sudan and occupies an area of about 40,000 square kilometers. The state borders Ethiopia from the south and southeast with Menza, Kurmuk and Geissan as the main border points, which serve as customs centers, routes for immigrants, displaced and refugees of both countries. In the west and southwest, the state borders Upper Nile State in South Sudan with vast agricultural lands; some of which are contested such as in Tadamon locality. Sennar state borders Blue Nile in the north and northeast and is also characterised by agricultural as well as grazing land. There are old nomadic routes through Blue Nile to South Sudan, which is a cause of seasonal localised conflicts between nomads and settled communities.

The armed conflict between the former regime and armed groups affected the state for decades and is considered one of the main causes of displacement in the Blue Nile. After the fall of the former regime, some of the refugees and IDPs in the Blue Nile state started to return to their villages of origin, which often lack basic infrastructure and services. The state is prone to flooding as the Blue Nile river tends to overflow during the rainy season (June to September) and subsequent water-borne and vector-borne disease outbreaks are common. From 2016 up to 2019, the state witnessed the repeated outbreak of cholera, as well as devastating floods in 2020. The current economic situation further exacerbated the situation especially for vulnerable populations, like conflict-affected and displaced people. According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 333,537 people remain in need of humanitarian assistance in Blue Nile state. The conflict has a serious impact on children and their communities, and there are an increasing number of female-headed households.

Climate

Blue Nile has been severely affected by climate change and is considered to be among the most rapidly warming locations in Sudan, with air temperatures increasing by one degree Celsius every year since the 1970s. In addition to a thirty-year trend of declining rainfall, there is evidence that rainfall is becoming more erratic. Further, groundwater depletion such as in Bau, Geissan, Kurmuk (Dindiro, Kurmuk town), Tadamon, some areas in Roseries and Wad El Mahi (Kadalo areas). Floods along the Blue Nile river and other seasonal streams also contribute to environmental degradation. Epidemics such as scabies, malaria and cholera are becoming recurrent phenomena. Intensive cutting of trees for charcoal making, as well as inappropriate management of liquid and solid waste have severely contributed to environmental degradation as well as a deteriorating socio-economic situation for many communities.

Economy

The removal of Sudan from the list of countries sponsor terrorist followed by debt relief recently will improve the economic situation and will increase opportunities for accessing international financing support through IMF and the World Bank. It will take time for the economic situation to improve sufficiently, and the most underserved communities and vulnerable groups will continue to suffer from high inflation. It is expected that the economic crisis will continue to drive humanitarian needs awhile. Even though Blue Nile state has an abundance of natural resources such as vast agriculture lands, cattle, fish, minerals (gold and chrome), livings standards have not improved much. Years of conflict, including tribal conflict, and land rights issues - connected with man-made and natural crises - remain a challenge in Blue Nile and increase the vulnerability of the population.

Extraction of minerals in Bau locality was stopped because the border trade with both Ethiopia and South Sudan was controlled by the government. Mining and agriculture are the fastest growing sectors of the economy. Unemployment stood at 18 per cent in 2018, and it is higher for young people. Most families continue to depend on small-scale agriculture to survive.

HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Continued Population Movement

Displacement in Blue Nile state is of a protracted nature; continuous waves of violence and conflict force people to move from place to place. The first wave of displacement occurred after the first attack of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North in 1987, which affected the population of Kurmuk locality severely. The second attack on Kurmuk took place in 1997, followed by the third attack in 2011, which compelled internally displaced people to find a new safe place. A considerable portion of the conflict-affected communities crossed the borders to Ethiopia and South Sudan and have taken shelter in refugee camps. Currently, due to signed Juba Peace Agreement (Agar faction of the SPLM-N) and the ongoing peace talks with the El Hilu faction along with the ceasefire between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N armed group, the security situation has significantly improved. As a result, refugees and displaced people have slowly started to return; first to towns nearby their village of origin, where there is provision of basic services and security. While meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of more than 104,000 IDPs, returnees and refugees who are sharing services with host communities, UNICEF is working towards re-establishing resilience and social cohesion and finding durable solutions for people on the move and host communities alike, including women, men, girls and boys living in non-government-controlled areas.



Humanitarian Access

In partnership with the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF has been at the forefront of delivering assistance to vulnerable, conflict-affected communities in Kurmuk, Geissan and Bau. For example, in late 2016, UNICEF initiated a breakthrough in humanitarian access to Kurmuk, a locality that had not been visited since 2011, after occupation by SPLM/N. In 2017, UNICEF collectively with other UN agencies and humanitarian workers managed to conduct a needs assessment in Geissan and Bau localities, and response plans were developed accordingly. At the moment, basic humanitarian, development, and peace nexus programmes are provided in all these localities. Moving forward will not only require additional financial and human resources but also a coordinated effort by the Government of Sudan, UN agencies and other humanitarian partners. In 2022, all government-controlled areas are accessible, while non-government-controlled areas remain partially accessible². Preparations are ongoing to support both government and SPLM-N controlled areas with sustainable humanitarian services to the conflict-affected populations.

Conflict, Peacebuilding and Climate Change

Peace – both at the national level as well as the locality and community level – is arguably one of the greatest bottlenecks to sustainable development in Blue Nile. While, for instance, some IDP communities continue to return to their villages of origins, a lasting return will not happen without the strengthening of conditions for what has been described as a ‘safe return’. This includes, but is not limited to, access to social and protection services for the displaced, strengthened governance as well as a culture of peace and respect for human rights. To this end, in 2020, the transitional Government of Sudan started to establish ‘peace markets’; thereby opening the corridors for provision of humanitarian assistance, and foster exchange visits between government and SPLM/N leaders to build trust for the ongoing peace talks. UNICEF working together with other governmental and non-governmental partners, supports peacebuilding through the equal provision of services to populations in government and non-government-controlled areas as well as through providing training of staff and partners on conflict-sensitive programming, peacebuilding, and climate change adaptation. The focus of UNICEF is to uphold the rights of young people by supporting services that contribute to social cohesion and resilience while also supporting the role of youth in their development and that of their community.

2 Ulu and surrounding areas, which are controlled by SPLM-N's Agar faction are now accessible and in collaboration with the Tripartite Humanitarian Committee, UNICEF provides humanitarian support to the population. Yabous and surrounding areas, which are controlled by SPLM-N's El Hilu's faction are only accessible for international staff of UN agencies.

KEY RESULTS IN 2021

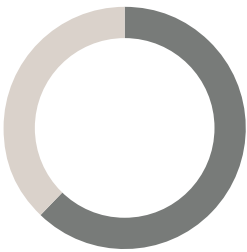
Unicef budget for Blue Nile:

USD 7,810,960

as of 1 April 2022

Funds received ▶ **64%**

Funding gap ▶ **36%**



8,966 severely acutely malnourished children (SAM) (under-five) were treated in 2021.

62,212 bed nets (long-lasting insecticidal nets) were distributed across the Blue Nile in 2021. These nets are keeping mothers and children safe from malaria and other infectious diseases.

220,000 children were reached with polio vaccinations and **30,170** children with measles vaccinations in 2021. In addition, 120 communities were covered with integrated management of childhood illness services.

21 communities (**11,521** people) gained access to basic sanitation and are now living in an environment free of open defecation.

156,930 people in humanitarian situations were reached with hygiene messages and adopted appropriate hygiene practices in 2021.

95,368 people were reached with basic water supply in both development and humanitarian situations in 2021.

273,947 people in humanitarian situations benefitted from water disinfection and operation and maintenance services for their drinking water supply.

Over **9,200** girls and boys were reached with learning materials and **18,413** children gained access to safe learning environments in 2021.

46 vulnerable girls and boys accessed vocational training in the Blue Nile. They are equipped with the skills necessary to start their own business and generate an income.

1,925 children received psychosocial support, and children with special needs were referred to specialised services.

530 unaccompanied or separated children were reunified with their families in 2021.