



# Shaping Collective Action for the Humanitarian Emergency in Sudan

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## CRITICAL DIALOGUE REPORT

23 April 2025

*Organised by:*

*International Rescue Committee (IRC), Stichting Vluchteling (SV)  
and The Hague Humanity Hub (THHH)*



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Humanitarian Emergency in Sudan

# CRITICAL DIALOGUE REPORT

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Context and Objectives	4
Participant Profile and Expectations	5
Methodology	6
Framing the Crisis	7
Key Insights	8
Policy and Action Recommendations	11
About the Organisers	13

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Sudan's humanitarian crisis is one of the most severe yet least visible global emergencies, with over 30 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 13 million displaced. Despite this magnitude, international media coverage and funding remain insufficient. On 23 April 2025, The Hague Humanity Hub, Stichting Vluchteling, and the International Rescue Committee convened a Critical Dialogue in The Hague, bringing together over 60 diverse stakeholders including Sudanese diaspora leaders, humanitarian NGOs, Dutch policymakers, private sector representatives, and peacebuilding experts.

At the same time, this moment offers an opportunity to reimagine the humanitarian sector. With severe funding cuts as a backdrop, the session explored how Dutch stakeholders can support Sudanese-led, locally grounded approaches that foster resilience and accountability.

Central themes included the empowerment of Sudanese farmers and micro-entrepreneurs, leveraging diaspora-led initiatives for effective grassroots support, aligning short-term aid with long-term peacebuilding strategies, and elevating Sudanese voices in global policy dialogues. The session called for political courage and practical partnerships that go beyond conventional aid models. The report synthesises key insights and offers comprehensive, actionable recommendations for policymakers, funders, and practitioners. The cost of inaction is too high. Sudan cannot wait.

# CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

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Entering its third year, the crisis in Sudan remains critically underreported, leading to an inadequate international response. Mischaracterised merely as a civil war, this crisis is, in reality, a complex humanitarian emergency requiring nuanced understanding and targeted interventions.

This Critical Dialogue aimed to:

- Elevate Sudanese voices and agency, ensuring these perspectives shape international responses;
- Critically assess recent Dutch policy emphasising private-sector engagement in humanitarian contexts, especially regarding food security and economic resilience;
- Facilitate inclusive, cross-sectoral collaboration;
- Generate precise recommendations to guide future humanitarian, developmental, and policy actions.

The dialogue was shaped through close collaboration with Sudanese diaspora organisations, Dutch governmental entities, and humanitarian experts.

# PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND EXPECTATIONS

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Participants spanned various sectors: humanitarian professionals, private sector executives, policy advisors, project managers, researchers, media correspondents, and diaspora advocates. Represented entities included civil society organisations, Dutch government bodies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RVO), and multiple independent experts.

Participant expectations strongly emphasised actionable outcomes, practical collaboration, enhanced understanding of the humanitarian landscape, increased visibility for Sudan's crisis, and specific guidance on the private sector's role. Highlighted questions included:

- "How can the private sector effectively enhance access and sustainability of humanitarian assistance?"
- "What lessons from Dutch humanitarian approaches are applicable to Sudan?"
- "What methods can effectively break international silence regarding Sudan?"

These priorities provided critical direction to the event's thematic discussions.

# METHODOLOGY

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The event featured prominent speakers whose expertise and affiliations enriched the dialogue, including:

- **Eatizaz Yousif**, Country Director, *IRC Sudan*
- **Khansa Alhag**, Managing Partner, *249Startups*
- **Ben Valk**, Global Head Food and Agri Partnerships, *Rabobank*, and Executive Director, *Sustain Africa*
- **Anette Hoffmann**, Senior Research Fellow, Conflict Research Unit, *Clingendael Institute*
- **Marthe-Hiev Hamidi**, Policy Officer Private Sector Development, *Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- **Ramiro Gomes Monteiro**, Coordinator Ecosystems and Social Entrepreneurship, *RVO/MFA*

The Critical Dialogue utilised a hybrid format combining plenary panel discussions, interactive breakout sessions, and collective reflections, conducted under Chatham House Rule to foster candid discourse. Framing was informed by current Dutch governmental policy shifts toward private-sector-led humanitarian efforts and insights from pre-event participant registrations.

# FRAMING THE CRISIS

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Central to the dialogue was the critical reframing of Sudan’s crisis: not as a civil war, but explicitly as a war against civilians, highlighting both human responsibility and the potential for human-driven solutions. Participants emphasised the urgency and possibility of constructive action:

**“This is a manmade crisis—and that means a manmade solution is possible.”**

Discussions consistently pointed out the need to complement current humanitarian action by advocating strongly for local, diaspora-informed, and sustainable solutions.

# KEY INSIGHTS

## Local resilience and economic empowerment

Participants underscored grassroots entrepreneurship, particularly among women and youth, as essential for community survival and dignity amid crisis:

**“Entrepreneurship in Sudan is about dignity and survival.”**

Emphasis was placed on investing in local agricultural capacities and infrastructures to achieve food sovereignty and long-term economic stability.

## Diaspora’s crucial role

The Sudanese diaspora was recognized as pivotal in bridging gaps between international agencies and local communities. Participants highlighted diaspora-led initiatives including community kitchens and youth programming, emphasising the need for direct funding and official recognition of these efforts:

**“Diaspora-led initiatives offer low-cost, high-impact solutions but lack necessary support and recognition.”**

# Transformative narrative and visibility

Participants challenged the current lack of accurate representation and visibility in international media, calling for coordinated narrative reshaping through strategic communication, visual storytelling, cultural diplomacy, and diaspora platforms:

**“There is a lack of video and visual material showing what’s actually happening on the ground.”**

# Ethical private sector engagement

The dialogue critically examined the increasing emphasis on private-sector involvement. While recognizing its potential for significant positive impact, participants cautioned against unregulated engagement that could exclude local actors or exploit vulnerabilities:

**“The challenge is not the private sector itself, but who defines the rules of engagement.”**

Participants advocated for ethical, transparent, and community-aligned private-sector collaborations.

# Structural transformation beyond immediate aid

Participants collectively urged a strategic transition from immediate relief to investments in governance reform, rebuilding agricultural value chains, youth leadership, and resilience-based development planning:

**“If peace came tomorrow, Sudan wouldn’t be ready. We must start preparing now.”**



# POLICY AND ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Critical Dialogue on the Humanitarian Emergency in Sudan, held on 23 April 2025 at The Hague Humanity Hub, represents a pivotal instantiation of the principles espoused by The Hague's ecosystem of peace and justice. By bringing together a diverse array of humanitarian professionals, Sudanese diaspora leaders, private sector actors, policy actors, and grassroots organisers, the dialogue led to a set of actionable recommendations.

## Reframe Sudan in global discourse

Develop a coordinated, narrative-driven communication strategy emphasising Sudanese resilience, correcting misinformation, and highlighting local initiatives to reshape international perceptions.

## Strengthen agricultural value chains and food sovereignty

Invest strategically in local agriculture through inputs, training, market development, and partnership-building to ensure food sovereignty and economic resilience.

## Empower diaspora-led initiatives

Establish clear pathways for diaspora organisations to access direct funding, formal recognition, and operational support, maximising their grassroots impact.

## Create risk-informed collaborative platforms

Establish dedicated digital and physical spaces for transparent information-sharing, stakeholder coordination, and risk management to improve the effectiveness of interventions.

## Promote inclusive governance and youth leadership

Foster replicable governance models emphasising youth inclusion, gender equity, and local decision-making, facilitating sustainable peacebuilding and resilience.

## Safeguarding and scaling up support for Sudan

To address the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, given the massive humanitarian needs, it is essential to increase funding for the humanitarian response in Sudan. Donors should channel resources through flexible and predictable funding modalities that can reach local and mutual aid groups, to ensure that support is locally anchored, coordinated, and responsive to the rapidly evolving crisis.

At the same time, donors should safeguard and increase development aid allocations to fragile countries such as Sudan, that might lack investment opportunities for the private sector but where funding is needed most, with particular emphasis on investments in infrastructure, basic services and livelihoods.

By combining long-term investments in resilience with strengthened humanitarian funding, the international community can better respond to urgent needs while laying the groundwork for recovery and stability in Sudan.

Additional insights highlighted the need for robust data-driven approaches, greater transparency in international engagement, and the active prevention of exclusionary or harmful economic practices.

# ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

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## The Hague Humanity Hub (THHH)

The Hague Humanity Hub is a vibrant, not-for-profit foundation based in The Hague, the international city of peace and justice, home to numerous organisations working towards global peace and justice. The Hub offers an innovative platform where changemakers from diverse sectors collaborate, share insights, form alliances, and create impactful solutions.

The Critical Dialogues are a core aspect of this mission, designed specifically to foster reflective, inclusive, and actionable conversations around complex global challenges, amplifying underrepresented voices and creating pathways for meaningful collective action.

## International Rescue Committee (IRC)

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises, helping to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing, and power to people devastated by conflict and disaster.

Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, the IRC is one of the world's largest international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (INGO), at work in more than 40 countries and 29 U.S. cities helping people to survive, reclaim control of their future and strengthen their communities. A force for humanity, IRC employees deliver lasting impact by restoring safety, dignity and hope to millions.

## Stichting Vluchteling (SV)

The Netherlands Refugee Foundation has been providing humanitarian aid to refugees and displaced persons since 1976. In acute crises, they help people affected by conflict, violence or natural disasters with lifesaving assistance by providing humanitarian aid, such as medical care, water, food and protection.

# CONTACT

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For more information or to get involved:

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**Website:** [www.humanityhub.net](http://www.humanityhub.net)

# APPENDIX A

## List of Resources

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Participants were encouraged to read the following resources prior to the session:

[Threat of food crisis in Sudan: potentially the biggest famine in decades; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of The Netherlands.](#)

[Third Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Sudan; European Commission.](#)

[The silent catastrophe: Sudan's continuing hunger crisis; Clingendael Spectator.](#)

[Food, power and politics. The political economy of wheat value chains in fragile settings; CRU Report.](#)

[Sudan: From Hunger to Death: An estimate of excess mortality in sudan, based on currently available information; Clingendael Alerts.](#)

[The Cost of Neglect: Two Years of War in Sudan; IRC Report.](#)

[Sudan: Two Years of War, Starvation and Global Failure, The World Must Act Now; Mercy Corps.](#)

[Eight stories about mutual aid to mark two years of war in Sudan; The New Humanitarian.](#)

[What new funding data tells us about donor decisions in 2025; The New Humanitarian.](#)

[What if we stopped aid altogether?; The new Humanitarian.](#)

[Any Hope Left for Diplomacy in Sudan?; The Horn.](#)

[As Sudan army gains drive mass returns, mutual aid groups begin to rebuild; The New Humanitarian.](#)

# APPENDIX B

## Event Agenda

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### **Shaping Collective Action for the Humanitarian Emergency in Sudan**

The Hague Humanity Hub - April 23, 2025, 15:00-17:00

This session will bring together participants to reflect on the role of diverse actors, especially Netherlands-based, in addressing the urgent and worsening humanitarian crisis in Sudan. With foreign aid in decline, there is a pressing need to explore alternative approaches to mitigate abuse, famine, and instability. The Dialogue will focus on the evolving role of Dutch actors, including the private sector, in light of the recent policy letter by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade & Development, which highlights private sector-led efforts in food security and economic resilience in Sudan. Together, we will explore how cross-sector collaboration can be strengthened and coordinated, while building on efforts already underway. The Hague, with its unique ecosystem of peace, justice, and humanitarian organisations, offers an ideal platform for this exchange. The goal is to produce a set of practical and forward-looking insights that inform national and international decision-making. Outcomes will be documented and used to shape further engagement.

#### **Objectives:**

- Provide insight into current dynamics and policy shifts
- Reflect critically on the work of various actors in Sudan
- Convene stakeholders and foster new connections
- Identify actionable next steps

#### **Programme Highlights**

##### **15:00 – Opening & Introductions**

- Agenda overview
- Who is in the room?
- What does success look like?

### **15:30 – Setting the Scene**

- Contextual framing and discussion kickoff
  - The state of Sudan:
    - Humanitarian perspective – Eatizaz Yousif
    - Private sector perspective – Ben Valk, Khansa Alhag
    - Political-economic perspective – Anette Hoffmann
    - MFA perspective – Ramiro Gomes Monteiro, Marthe-Hiev Hamidi
- Questions, and plenary reflection

### **16:00 Small Group Discussion**

- Questions to guide the discussion. A note taker for each group captures key information to share in plenary and with the organizers for an event report-out.

### **16:30 Sharing, Discussion, Recommendations, & Next Steps**

### **17:00 Thanks & Closing**

- Stay for a drink!

### **Questions for breakout sessions:**

- **How can actors across sectors — humanitarian, development, private - better engage one another in responding to the crisis in Sudan, especially in light of massive budget cuts and urgent humanitarian needs?**
  - What are the most urgent coordination gaps that need to be addressed between humanitarian, development, private sector, and policy actors?
  - How can we better align our approaches given shrinking resources?
  - Where can cross-sector collaboration strengthen outcomes?
- **How can the Dutch emphasis on private-sector led initiatives be meaningfully applied in Sudan, without reinforcing harmful dynamics or excluding local actors?**
  - What are the risks and opportunities of investment-led engagement
  - What safeguards or partnerships are needed to ensure we do this well?
  - What critical lessons can we learn from past international responses to conflict in Sudan (e.g., 2003 onwards)? What failed? What succeeded? How do we apply those lessons moving forward?

- **How can short-term emergency responses be better connected to long-term peacebuilding and resilience, and how can we ensure that Sudanese voices, especially from the refugee and diaspora communities, are leading in shaping solutions?**
  - How do we ensure Sudanese perspectives are central in shaping this role?
  - What barriers exist to inclusion and how can they be removed?
  - What does meaningful participation look like?