

## **USAID in Sudan and South Sudan**

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The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has a long history of doing development and humanitarian work in Sudan and South Sudan. In the 1970s and 80s, Sudan (at that time including the area that is now South Sudan) was USAID's largest Mission in Africa, with a broad range of development work, including support to agriculture, health, education, democracy and good governance, economic growth and the private sector, as well as humanitarian assistance as and when needed. However, with the military coup that brought Omar al-Bashir to power in 1989, USAID's development activities were quickly drawn down and closed out, in accordance with US government law that requires the cessation of development assistance to countries following a coup. Life-saving humanitarian assistance continued, especially to victims of the fighting in Darfur and in southern Sudan.

**South Sudan:** With the independence of South Sudan in 2011, a new USAID Mission was opened in Juba to provide a wide range of development activities to support the new state and its people. The humanitarian assistance continued as needed in support of the victims of both natural and man-made disasters, especially following the outbreak of civil war in December 2013, and the suffering and displacement of many thousands of people. The heady optimism of the early days of the new state has sadly dissipated and the development programs have had to be scaled back and focused where USAID has partners with whom they can work and are confident that their support is properly used. They are no longer providing support to or working directly with the national government in South Sudan, but are instead focused at the local, county level in 5 states. They are primarily working through non-government organizations, in the fields of health, agriculture, education and economic growth, focusing on restoring livelihoods in an approach that integrates humanitarian assistance with longer-term development activities. This is intended to help build resilience in local communities, so that they can mitigate the impact of disasters and quickly bounce back and continue their development growth.

USAID maintains a website with a lot of information about their work in South Sudan, including descriptions of their programs, press releases and feature stories, which is at <https://www.usaid.gov/south-sudan>. Also, USAID publishes a "roadmap" for each country they work in, measuring how well they are progressing on the road to development, based on measures of capacity and commitment. The South Sudan roadmap can be found at <https://roadmaps.usaid.gov/country/south-sudan>. Finally, USAID has developed a unique South Sudan Strategic Framework --

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Strategic-Framework-SouthSudan-July-2024-public-version.pdf> -- which guides their work in the country.

USAID currently has a staff of over 30 American and international personnel in Juba, plus about 100 South Sudanese staff. The budget for their development activities, as approved by Congress, is approximately \$70 million per year. Their humanitarian assistance budget varies year-to-year, depending on the needs, but is now over \$700 million this year, the largest it has been since the USAID Mission in Juba was opened, indicating the dire humanitarian situation in the country.

**Sudan:** In Khartoum, with the overthrow of Bashir and the signing of the Abraham Accords between Israel and Sudan, development assistance to Sudan was restarted. The staff has been increasing from only 2 US personnel a couple of years ago to 9 by the end of this year and the budget for development activities has increased from \$5 million to \$30 million, including support for human rights, civil society and the media. Humanitarian assistance support continues at about \$250 million per year.

There are two other, rather unique interventions in Sudan. USAID has initiated an OTI (Office of Transitions Initiative) program, which provides short-term, in-kind assistance to a wide variety of local organizations to support the “transition” from autocracy to democracy at the community level. This can include anything from soccer balls to start a soccer league, equipment to start a local private radio station, computers to open an internet café, books for a library, etc. The program is managed in-country, with the managers having a lot of flexibility to make decisions and act quickly, and support can be provided to civil society groups, local entrepreneurs, religious groups, local government, etc. At \$78 million for 3 years, it is currently the largest OTI program in the world.

The other unique intervention regarding US government support to Sudan is a direct result of the Abraham Accords. Congress authorized a “supplemental fund” (i.e. over and above the regular budget) of \$700 million for Sudan. Discussions are still going on between State Department, USAID and other agencies about how that money will be allocated and spent, and with the re-intervention of the military in taking over the government in Sudan, any assistance to the national government has again been suspended.

Descriptions of the USAID development programs in Sudan can be found at <https://www.usaid.gov/sudan>, and the development “roadmap” for the country is at <https://roadmaps.usaid.gov/country/sudan>. As a program that is in flux and rapidly evolving, they have not yet finalized a country strategy.

It is clear that USAID, as the primary development and humanitarian agency of the US government, has had and will continue to have a strong commitment to the people of

Sudan and South Sudan. However, it is also clear that they will have to continue to be flexible in their programs and means of providing that assistance given the dynamic situations, the challenging work environment and the needs in those two countries.