

A young boy with a joyful expression is holding a white goat. In the background, another child is visible, looking towards the camera. The scene is set outdoors with green foliage. A large red graphic element, resembling a stylized 'C' or a protective shield, frames the left and bottom portions of the image.

STORIES OF **RESILIENCE**

CONFLICT, COVID-19 AND

CLIMATE CHANGE **IN SUDAN**



Save the Children

INTRODUCTION

Sudan, once Africa's largest country, has faced political, economic, social, and environmental challenges since gaining independence in 1956. These problems have led to armed conflict and displacement, poverty and economic stagnation, and the weakening of state institutions, especially in the country's peripheries. Today, the economy is facing major challenges despite Sudan's abundant natural resources and the vast potential of its resilient youth. Conflict continues to plague many areas of the country, preventing economic development and lasting peace. Environmental problems and the negative impacts of climate change have produced system shocks, including more severe and prolonged flooding, the outbreak of diseases, and created more competition over scarce water and land resources. Sudan has been a hospitable host for some 1.1 million refugees and is home to three million internally displaced persons. These challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Sudan made significant progress after the 2019 nonviolent popular uprising, which created an opportunity to address the country's problems. Major changes were implemented, including economic reforms that aimed to address the structural distortions in the economy, the signing of a historic peace agreement that ended conflicts with a large

portion of armed groups operating in the country, and several legislative reforms were put in place. Despite this progress, the political context continues to be extremely uncertain. Nevertheless, the Sudanese people have showcased, through their perseverance, a resilient spirit to overcome these obstacles and try to create better lives for themselves and their children. This book highlights the stories of Sudanese children and families who have managed to overcome significant challenges in their daily lives, ranging from those who have survived conflicts in Darfur, to families whose lives have been upended by climate change, and the impact of COVID-19 on children. Save the Children, for almost four decades, has supported the resilient Sudanese families and children with whom we work. Our efforts are made possible by the support of generous donors, our instrumental national partners, and the almost 500-strong Save the Children staff operating in offices in 13 out of 18 states. children. **Save the Children has, for almost four decades, worked to improve the lives and outcomes of Sudanese children and their families. Our work is made possible by the support of generous donors, our instrumental national partners, and the almost 500-strong Save the Children staff operating in offices in 13 out of 18 states.**



Conflict in West Darfur

Conflict in Darfur has its roots in a long history of marginalization, which has been complicated by the impacts of climate, intercommunal competition over resources, and political tensions that broke out into civil war in 2003. The impacts of conflicts on children are especially acute. Throughout the past two decades, generations of children have been forced into displaced persons camps where they have been deprived of any semblance of normal lives. This displacement has significant negative economic, psychosocial, and economic impacts on the most vulnerable children. Despite the difficult operating environment, Save the Children has operations in North, Central, and West Darfur States, where we operate programs in Health and Nutrition, Education, Food Security and Livelihoods, and WASH.



Magda

"I am 14 years old and I live with my mother, four sisters and three brothers in the camp for displaced people. I often remember our house: It had three bedrooms, a yard, and a kitchen. One night our village was attacked and burned to the ground and we had to flee. **What I miss most from our old village is my school.** Back home, I used to get up very early in the morning and go to school. When I came home, I helped my mother with cooking and washing. In my free time I used to draw.

Now I am not going to school anymore. The camp here is overcrowded and my mother does not have much time for me, because she is always searching for work. What makes me happy is to meet my best friend. We go together to the Child Friendly Space and they give us coloured pencils and drawing sheets. **I love to draw and I forget everything around me when I do that.** I also like to play ball with my friends. Now my only dream is to go back to school and to become a doctor."





Zainab

"I am 27 years old and I am a mother of four children. One and a half years ago, my husband brought us here to the camp because of the conflict in our home village.

We came here on foot and we found other displaced people in the area and we stayed with them. **In the beginning, the neighbours and some generous people shared their food with us.** I am very grateful for this.

I do not have any friends here from before and also my husband left us. Every day, I go to the city trying to find some work like cleaning, washing and ironing. To do that, I have to leave my children alone in the camp, which scares me.

Recently I started bringing my children to the Child Friendly Space and I feel they are safe. I also received free medical care from Save the Children for my small son, which helped me a lot.

I often feel hopeless. The only thing that makes me happy is to think about my old life when I was growing millet. **My dream is to go back home one day.**"

Elnour

“When I was a child, we were displaced by conflict in West Darfur. After I grew up, I went to the capital Khartoum for vocational training. Then I married, came back to our village and we lived a happy and stable life. Last year, conflict broke out again and I was hit by two bullets in my foot. Also, my house was burned down and we fled to Geneina. My life became difficult again and I started to lose hope.

After we arrived to the camp, someone asked me to join Save the Children as a volunteer. At first, I was reluctant, because of my injury. Yet, after I participated in the training, I felt comfortable in my new role. Now, **I want to help children overcome what they experienced during conflict and displacement.**

In the morning, I open the centre, take out the toys and make sure the children arrive safely. Then we divide the children into groups according to their age and interests. We take great care and observe the children. There is also a special group for the protection of girls from rape. Some children are referred to the therapist, because we are concerned, that they need more support. We ask the child’s guardian to come with us to the health centre.

My wish is that life will be safe. I fear for my children a lot when I hear the sound of bullets. Sometimes, I prevent them from going out, because I am afraid, that a stray bullet might hit them and they will not come home again.”





Climate Change in Red Sea

Sudan is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change. The impact of the climate crisis has resulted in rising temperatures, increased desertification, more erratic rainfall and flooding, more severe droughts, and scarcity of drinking water. Sudan's vulnerability to climate change has negative effects on agriculture and irrigation, which exacerbate issues of food security and livelihoods. In 2020, the country experienced the worst floods in 100 years, affecting some three million people and killing dozens. These impacts of climate change on Sudan have instigated social and political tensions throughout the country and have stymied sustainable development. Climate change is also a direct driver of armed conflict, where pastoralist and farming communities are forced to compete over dwindling natural resources. Moreover, Sudan's increasingly urban population, largely a result of conflicts in the productive hinterlands, is undermining the country's productive potential. Save the Children is implementing programs aimed at supporting families and children adversely affected by climate change, including health, education, food security, and livelihoods programs.

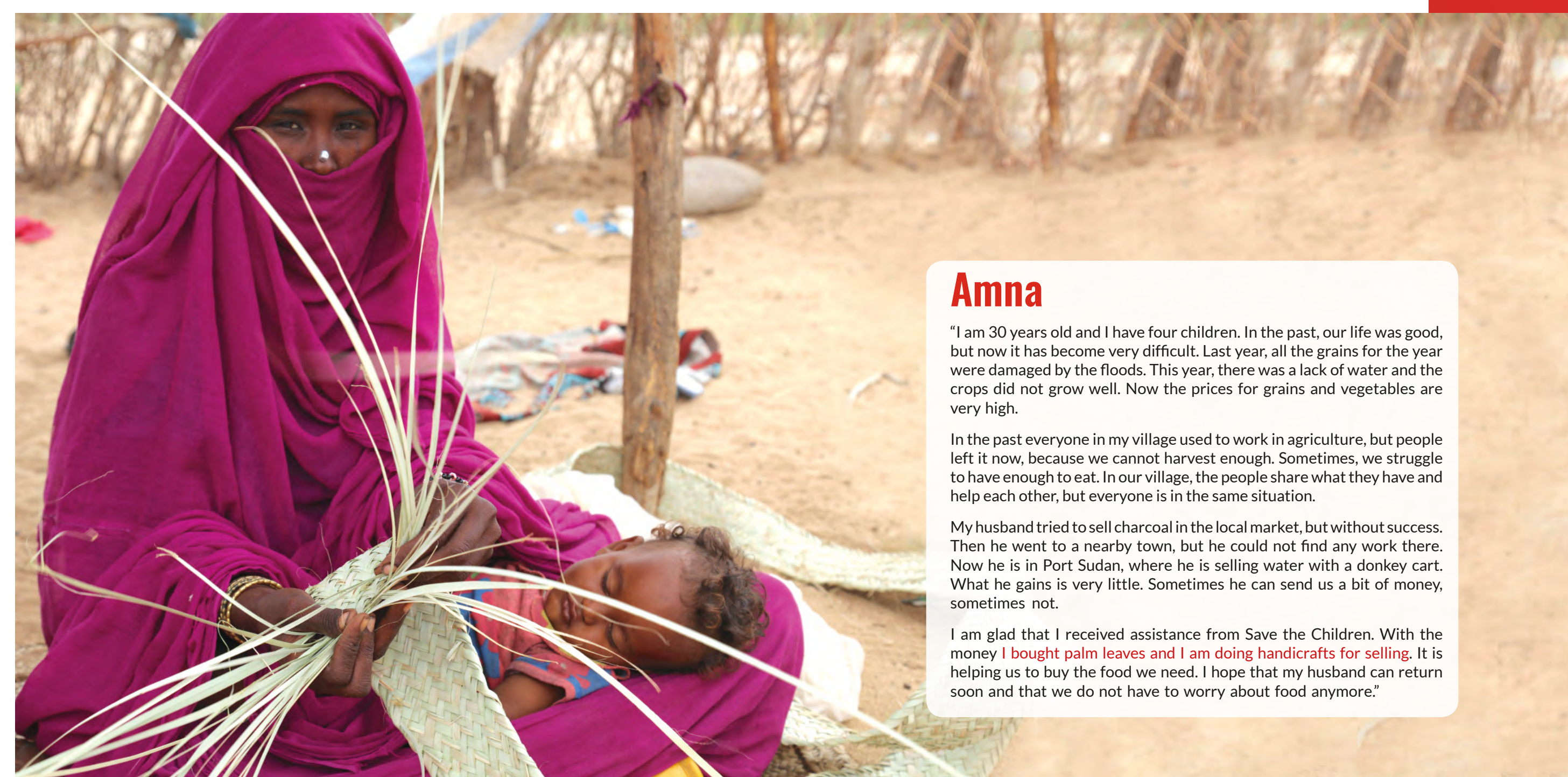


Mohameddeen

"I am 12 years old. I live with my parents, my two brothers and two sisters. Last year our house was destroyed by the floods. I still remember that day and it makes me sad. The flood also destroyed our crops that we kept for the whole year. After that, we did not have enough to eat. This year, the water did not come and our crops did not grow well. My father also works as a teacher in the religious school, but he says that his salary is not enough to buy the food we need, because prices have increased a lot.

Last year, we received two goats from Save the Children, now we have five. All children drink the milk of the goats which gives us energy and we feel well. I am responsible for feeding the animals, but sometimes I cannot find enough food for them. I am afraid that we might have to sell one goat in the dry season to buy the food for the others ones. Then we will have less milk again. When I am not helping my parents, I play with my friends. **I like is the stick game. We take a small stick and flip it up into the air and then we hit it to fly as far as possible.**"





Amna

"I am 30 years old and I have four children. In the past, our life was good, but now it has become very difficult. Last year, all the grains for the year were damaged by the floods. This year, there was a lack of water and the crops did not grow well. Now the prices for grains and vegetables are very high.

In the past everyone in my village used to work in agriculture, but people left it now, because we cannot harvest enough. Sometimes, we struggle to have enough to eat. In our village, the people share what they have and help each other, but everyone is in the same situation.

My husband tried to sell charcoal in the local market, but without success. Then he went to a nearby town, but he could not find any work there. Now he is in Port Sudan, where he is selling water with a donkey cart. What he gains is very little. Sometimes he can send us a bit of money, sometimes not.

I am glad that I received assistance from Save the Children. With the money I bought palm leaves and I am doing handicrafts for selling. It is helping us to buy the food we need. I hope that my husband can return soon and that we do not have to worry about food anymore."



Abu Ali

“My name is Abu Ali, I am 40 years old. I have three children, two sons and a daughter. During the farming season, I take my children with me to the fields. I am teaching them there. When we return to the village, they go to school.

Last year, when the floods came, animal diseases spread and my 30 sheep died. Thanks to the cash assistance received from Save the Children, **I was able to buy seeds for agriculture.**

Yet, this year, the millet also did not grow well because there was little water and the birds ate what we got, but we succeeded with other crops. I work from the morning in the farm to plant and harvest. We collect all the crops in the storage, in order to use it throughout the year.”



Covid-19 in Khartoum

The global COVID-19 pandemic has hit Sudan especially hard. In 2020, the Government of Sudan lost an estimated 60 percent of its projected revenues due to the pandemic lockdowns. The economic impacts of the pandemic caused severe strain on Sudanese children and families, especially the most marginalized. Unlike many other places around the world, most schoolchildren in Sudan were not able to continue their education online and, as a result, have fallen behind in school. Moreover, the pandemic has put a significant strain on the already fragile healthcare system in Sudan, with most hospitals forced to shut down. Nevertheless, since March 2020, Save the Children stepped up to the challenge. We ramped up our health operations throughout the country and supported several large COVID-19 isolation centres, which include operations in Khartoum, Red Sea, Gezira, Sennar, River Nile, and White Nile states. In addition, Save the Children operates the only obstetric isolation facility for COVID-19 patients in Sudan, as well as an extensive program on risk communication and community engagement activities on vaccine uptake.



Fatima

“When they announced the school closure due to COVID-19, we thought it would be for a short time. We didn’t think it would be this long, and we didn’t think it would happen more than once; coming back to school was not easy. If it wasn’t for the coronavirus, I would be in high school right now.

During our time off, my sister and I would go with my mom to work, selling tea, and help her during the day. My mother loves education. When she was younger, she wasn’t able to attend school, so her life was tough. She always tells me that she wants me to keep studying hard, so that I will have a better life than she did. She motivates me by making me tea to get energized and telling me to take a break and pray. She works really hard.

I really hope schools don’t close again. **I want to finish school because I have dreams to achieve. I want to be a doctor.** I hate seeing people falling ill and not receiving the treatment they need. A lot of people die because they cannot afford medication and healthcare. When I am a doctor, I will treat them for a fraction of the actual cost. I also want to have a hospital and name it after my mother.”

Lubaba

"I am one of two psychologists in the Khartoum isolation centre. My work centres around helping patients, both children and adults, to cope with the negative emotions, such as denial, fear, anger, and resistance, related to COVID-19.

Usually, patients wonder 'Why me?' and this is normal in anyone's circle of grief. Yet, if you're too resistant, you will break. **Resilience is about being flexible** and increasing awareness. So, we start by increasing the knowledge about the illness.

The pandemic was severely stigmatized, especially during the first wave. At the beginning, it was a community-wide denial of its existence, and then, it became about fear and avoidance of suspected cases. This left COVID-19 patients with a sense of isolation – not just on a literal and physical level of quarantining, but on a social level.

We work with every patient individually to help them find their resilience factors: in our communities, this is mostly religion, and social systems like close family and friends. If there are economic-related stress factors we actively contact people, the patients mention, who can financially support their family during this time.

Children admitted into isolation need a completely different set of intervention tools. Children's fears – almost always – come from losing their support systems; these are people closest to them, usually their parents and siblings.

We always ensure they receive visits – with protocols in place – or video calls from their loved ones, and that they know these loved ones are near and they care, and they will be reunited as soon as possible. We also get materials for drawing and coloring, or speakers for playing music they love.

In all cases, we are keen on focusing on the hopes and dreams of our patients to strengthen them. And when someone is released, we celebrate. This also helps me to build my own resilience."



Suzanne

"My mother Layla was always patient; she never complained and never liked to show her weakness. She was always active at home; a few days before she contracted COVID-19, she was standing in the kitchen baking us fresh bread. We were so careful at home, and we followed all safety standards and measures. So, when the symptoms began, we never thought it would be the virus.

We were unable to be with her there. That was the hardest part. We had arranged for video calls and we had to keep ourselves together so she would stay optimistic. She was loving until the very end, telling us she's praying for her recovery because she can't wait to get home and be with us. In the last two days before she passed away, it seemed that she was getting better. So, getting the phone call from the doctor was the most unreal moment of all.

She meant the world to us, especially after losing our dad years ago. She filled in for both parents, and she was a leader. She was resilient. I get upset when people deny the existence of COVID-19. I make sure at any moment that people know that it's very real and the loss is especially painful. **She taught us to have respect and to have faith – always. This is what is helping us face the world without her."**





Save the Children