Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker

Sudan Economic Brief

May 2026

Covering the period: 1–31 May 2026

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** All dollar equivalents are calculated using the parallel market average rate (~4,300 SDG/USD) as the most accurate reflection of actual daily economic transaction values.*

Quick Snapshot — Key Indicators

Indicator	Sudanese Pound (SDG)
Central Bank of Sudan (CBS) official dollar rate	445–449 SDG
Parallel market dollar rate (actual transactions)	4,200–4,400 SDG
Annual inflation – Q1 2026	44.5%
Gold exports in April and May 2026	4.85 metric tons, worth approximately USD 692 million
Gold price per ounce	USD 4,450+
Electricity sector losses	USD three billion (SDG 12.8 trillion)
People facing crisis levels of food insecurity	19.5 million (40%+ of population)
Humanitarian funding received	27% of USD 2.9 billion target
African Development Bank grant (signed)	USD 83 million
Poverty rate in conflict areas	~73% of population, compared to 45% in 2023

Key Costs

Indicator	Sudanese Pound (SDG)	USD Equivalent (@4,300 SDG)
24-karat gold price per gram (local)	615,000–630,000 SDG	~$143–$147
50 kg sugar sack	200,000+ SDG	~$46.5+
Gas cylinder	120,000 SDG	~$27.9

50 kg urea sack	180,000+ SDG	~$41.9+ (+67% year-on-year)
Cost to cultivate one feddan of wheat	1,200,000 SDG	~$279

Section 1 — Macroeconomic Trends

The macroeconomic landscape in May 2026 is defined by deep structural fragility: a widening exchange rate gap, persistently high inflation, and a war economy that continues to erode formal financial institutions. The second half of the month added new pressures in the form of banking app paralysis and rising imported fuel prices driven by regional tensions.

A. Exchange Rate

The parallel market dollar rate held at 4,200–4,400 SDG throughout May — the highest sustained level since the war began — while the Central Bank of Sudan (CBoS) rate remained frozen at around 446 SDG. The 9.6-fold gap represents a near-complete disconnect between the formal and parallel systems.

Figure 1: Dollar Rate by Channel — May 2026

Institution	Buy Rate	Sell Rate	USD Equivalent
Central Bank of Sudan (CBS)	445 SDG	449 SDG	~$0.10/SDG (reference)
Bank of Khartoum	3,170 SDG	3,193 SDG	~$0.74/SDG
Omdurman National Bank	3,672 SDG	3,700 SDG	~$0.85/SDG
Al-Salam Bank	4,124 SDG	4,136 SDG	~$0.96/SDG
Parallel Market	4,200 SDG	4,400 SDG	Actual transaction rate

📌 *Eid al-Adha seasonal demand is expected to put additional pressure on the parallel market in June. The gap between the CBS official rate and the parallel market is the widest since the war erupted in April 2023, when the official rate was below 450 SDG and the parallel rate was around 607 SDG. The value of the pound decreased another 2-7% in the last month, from ~4,100 in April 2026 to 4,200–4,400 SDG in May 2026. Overall, the value of the pound is only about one seventh now what it was in 2023.*

⚠ **Banking app outages in the second half of May paralyzed electronic transactions and deepened reliance on cash parallel market activity.**

B. Inflation and Cost of Living

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) recorded a fall in inflation in May from 45.8% in April to 44.5% in May 2026, while the IMF projects an inflation rate in consumer prices of ~75.1%. However, field market data reveal far sharper pressures — particularly on food, fuel, and agricultural inputs — driven by supply chain collapse, fuel shortages, and currency depreciation.

Commodity / Unit	Price (SDG)	USD Equivalent	Year-on-Year Change
50 kg sugar sack	200,000+ SDG	~$46.5+	Customs raised to 25%
Diesel (per litre)	6,867+ SDG	~$1.60+	Ongoing increase
200-litre petrol barrel (Gedaref)	1,800,000 SDG	~$419	+100% year-on-year
Gas cylinder	120,000 SDG	~$27.9	Sharp rise
Agricultural diesel — Nile states	80,000–100,000 SDG	~$18.6–$23.3	Rising
Agricultural batteries — Blue Nile (peak)	250,000 SDG	~$58.1	From ~$16.3
50 kg urea sack	180,000+ SDG	~$41.9+	+67% (was ~$10.5)

📌 *The cumulative increase in imported energy costs since April 2023 has exceeded 1,200%.*

C. Foreign Trade and Gold Exports

Gold remains the primary source of foreign exchange. Approximately 4.85 metric tons were officially exported in the first two months of 2026, equivalent to ~$692 million at the current market rate of $4,450+/oz. However, smuggling is estimated to cost the country ~$7 billion annually.

📌 *CBS Circulars 11, 12, and 13 (May 2026) aim to incentivize the channeling of export proceeds through official routes, but their effectiveness will depend on institutional capacity and narrowing the parallel rate gap.*

Gold Price Comparison: First Half vs Second Half — May 2026

Grade / Unit	1–14 May (SDG)	15–31 May (SDG)
24-karat per gram	86,597–90,000 SDG (~$20.9)	615,000–630,000 SDG (~$147)
21-karat per gram	75,772–78,800 SDG (~$18.3)	538,000–545,000 SDG (~$127)
18-karat per gram	67,000–68,000 SDG (~$15.8)	461,000–465,000 SDG (~$108)
Global spot price per ounce	$3,200+	$4,450+

⚠ The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) control artisanal mining in Darfur and West Kordofan through affiliated companies, operating outside the formal oversight of the Central Bank of Sudan.

D. CBS and Ministry of Finance Policies

- CBS Circulars 11, 12, and 13 liberalized gold exports, allowing them to be 100% self-funded and providing price incentives for exporters. This package represents the most significant monetary policy shift since the war began, despite the risk of entrenching multiple exchange rates.

- Currency Replacement (Phase 2): The exchange of 500 and 1,000 SDG banknotes was completed in Khartoum, Gezira, and parts of White Nile by May 15, 2026.
- Import Ban: Council of Ministers Decision No. 74/2026 banned the import of 34 luxury goods, effective May 10, 2026.
- Civil Service Reform: Recommendations to reduce staff numbers and offer early retirement to a portion of the workforce — prompting widespread concern among legal and professional groups.
- Digital Economy: The 'SudaPass' digital identity initiative is being presented as a future tool for restoring banking confidence.

Section 2 — Food Security and Livelihoods

Food security in May 2026 is deteriorating toward catastrophic levels, amid the collapse of the agricultural season, destruction of rural infrastructure, and a severe shortfall in humanitarian response funding. The approaching lean season (June–September) signals further deterioration ahead.

A. Acute Hunger — Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)

Figure 3: Acute Hunger by IPC Phase — February–May 2026 (Total: 19.5 million people)

IPC Phase	Number Affected	Key Areas
IPC 3 — Crisis	~14.4 million	Spread across conflict-affected states
IPC 4 — Emergency	5+ million	Darfur, Kordofan, Khartoum
IPC 5 — Catastrophe	135,000	Kadugli, El Fasher, Kornoy, Kutum
Children under 5 (acute malnutrition)	825,000 (+25% pre-war)	Nationwide
In need of humanitarian assistance	33.7 million (two-thirds of population)	Nationwide

Figure 4: Humanitarian Funding Gap — Sudan 2026 (Only 27% of $2.9 billion received)

Funding Indicator	Amount	Notes
Required	$2.9 billion	Full humanitarian response
Received (27%)	~$775.2 million	Insufficient
Unfunded gap (73%)	~$2.12 billion	Leaving millions without aid

"The regional war has made things far worse. Overall production could fall by at least 40%." — Sadiq al-Amin, Food Security Analyst, FAO Sudan

⚠ OCHA: Continued shocks risk pushing hunger beyond the current food crisis.

B. Agricultural Sector — War, Looting, and the Finance Crisis

On May 23, FAO warned that the 2026 summer agricultural season faces losses of up to 40% without immediate intervention. Three compounding factors are driving this collapse:

- Prohibitive input costs: Urea up 67% year-on-year to ~$41.9/sack; fuel doubled; cultivating one feddan of wheat costs ~$279 against low crop prices — making production a guaranteed loss.
- Finance collapse: Non-performing loans represent ~50% of bank portfolios; credit terms are punishing and short (6–8 months at 20–35% interest). 175 farmers in Abri (Northern State) face imprisonment after power outages of 18 hours/day destroyed their crops, leaving them unable to repay loans.
- Physical destruction and displacement: 60% of pre-war cultivated land is out of production; tractors have been looted; farmworkers conscripted or displaced; entire rural communities have fled conflict zones.

Figure 5: Rise in Agricultural Input Costs vs Last Year — May 2026

Input / Unit	Current Price (SDG)	USD Equivalent	Change vs Last Year
50 kg urea sack	180,000 SDG	~$41.9	+67%
200-litre petrol barrel (farm)	1,800,000 SDG	~$419	+100%
Agricultural batteries (Blue Nile)	250,000 SDG	~$58.1	+257%
Cost to cultivate one feddan of wheat	1,200,000 SDG	~$279	No profit margin
Wheat/urea ratio (field reference)	2 wheat sacks = 1 urea sack	Production at a loss	—

Field Testimonials

"We make no profit at this price — we spend everything on diesel." — Bashir Ismail, farmer, Al-Jamouiya Project (southern Omdurman)

Agricultural Exchange Prices — May 2026

Crop / Exchange / Unit	Price (SDG)	USD Equivalent
Sorghum (dura) — Gedaref — ardab (~90 kg)	250,000 SDG	~$58.1
Millet — Gedaref — ardab	350,000 SDG	~$81.4
White sesame — Gedaref — qintar (45 kg)	185,000 SDG	~$43.0
New shelled fava beans — El Obeid — per ton	4,400,000 SDG	~$1,023
Peanuts — El-Nahud — per ton	570,000+ SDG	~$132+

📌 *Rising crop prices reflect supply scarcity and high production costs — not genuine agricultural prosperity. Prices above represent the full-month average (1–31 May) with strong consistency between the two halves.*

Additional Data from El Obeid Exchange — First Half of May

Crop / Unit	First Half Price (SDG)	Second Half Price (SDG)	Trend
Old shelled fava beans — per ton	4,100,000 SDG (~$953)	4,100,000 SDG (~$953)	Stable
New shelled fava beans — per ton	4,400,000 SDG (~$1,023)	4,400,000 SDG (~$1,023)	Stable
Millet — ardab (Gedaref)	350,000 SDG (~$81)	350,000 SDG (~$81)	Stable

C. Electricity Crisis and Agricultural Collapse

A UNDP report released May 18, 2026 documented electricity sector damage of ~$3 billion, with national access rates falling to 45–60%. RSF drone strikes on the Merowe Dam have created a stark divide: mining areas enjoy 24 hours of supply, while the agricultural town of Abri suffers up to 18-hour daily outages.

Electricity Indicator	Value
National access rate	45–60% (concentrated in urban areas)
Installed solar capacity (2025)	~190 MW (1.3% of 15 GW potential)
Daily supply hours in Abri	6 hours only
Daily supply hours in mining zones and Wadi Halfa	24 hours
Gas cylinder (electricity substitute)	120,000 SDG (~$27.9)
Solar loan interest rates / terms	20–35%, 6–8 month terms
Solar system savings vs diesel	Up to 70%

The Abri Crisis — 175 Farmers Facing Imprisonment
A Radio Dabanga report (May 26, 2026) documented at least 175 complaints filed against farmers in Abri for failure to repay Agricultural Bank loans — after persistent power outages (18+ hours/day) destroyed their winter season. Peaceful protests were met with tear gas, arrests, and house raids. Residents proposed a practical solution: electricity for agriculture during the day and for mining at night — but authorities did not respond.

Section 3: External Relations and Investment

External economic relations and investment across different areas of control: grants and foreign direct investment flowing into areas under Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) control on one hand, and the war economy, mining networks, and cross-border smuggling operating in RSF-controlled areas on the other. This contrast illustrates how the conflict is reshaping channels of external financing and resource access between the two parties.

A. African Development Bank — $83 Million Agricultural Grant

On May 29, 2026, Sudan signed an $83 million grant agreement with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to support agricultural production and food security in the states of Sennar, Kassala, and Blue Nile — all three under SAF control.

AfDB Grant Detail	Value
Total grant	$83 million (~357 billion SDG)
Beneficiary states	Sennar, Kassala, Blue Nile
Control status	All three states under SAF control
Purpose	Agricultural production and food security
Signing date	May 29 2026

⚠ The grant's geographic scope — restricted to SAF-controlled states — reflects a structural disparity driven by the conflict. Areas effectively under RSF control (Darfur, West Kordofan, parts of Khartoum) are systematically excluded from international food security and early recovery support, compounding civilian suffering and entrenching a two-tier humanitarian access system.

B. Qatar Mining — $800 Million in Copper

Qatar Mining announced an $800 million investment in Sudan's copper mining sector — one of the largest FDI commitments since the war began. The investment includes deploying drones and AI systems for geological exploration.

Investment Detail	Value
Total investment	$800 million (~3.44 trillion SDG)
Sector	Copper mining
Technology	Drones and geological AI systems
Status	Committed; implementation ongoing

📌 *The impact of the Qatari investment depends on whether its revenues flow to the official treasury or to war economy channels.*

C. RSF-Controlled Areas — The War Economy in Darfur and Kordofan

RSF-controlled areas in Darfur and Kordofan saw sharp economic contraction and an entrenched war economy in the second half of May, characterized by commercial monopolies, collapsing purchasing power, and near-total dependence on mining and smuggling.

War Economy Indicator	Value	USD Equivalent
Poverty rate in conflict areas	~70% of population	—
Per-fighter incentive (RSF)	~1,720,000 SDG	~$400
Electricity in Nyala and Darfur cities	Near-total outage	High cost of alternatives
Food availability in Nyala markets	Severe shortage	Record prices
RSF financing sources	Mining + smuggling + market monopolies	Primary dollar source
Cross-border smuggling routes	Chad, Libya, South Sudan	Supplies + military hardware

- Artisanal mining: Gold revenues from Darfur and West Kordofan flow through RSF-affiliated companies — the primary source of foreign exchange.
- Military reinforcements: More than 6 battalions transferred via Nyala Airport over the past two years with per-fighter incentives of ~$400.

⚠ SAF airstrike over several days in mid-May targeted RSF logistic, including a fuel depot near Nyala Airport, partially paralyzing markets and causing a sharp spike in fuel prices.

Section 4 — Policy Recommendations for International Actors

The following recommendations are directed primarily at international donors, multilateral institutions, and diplomatic actors engaged in the Sudanese crisis.

1. Accelerate and Scale Up Humanitarian Funding

Only 27% of the 2026 $2.9 billion appeal has been funded. Donors must front-load contributions before the lean season begins (June–September), with the highest priority given to nutrition programs targeting 825,000 children under five suffering from acute malnutrition.

2. Demand Equitable Humanitarian Access Across Conflict Lines

The AfDB grant — restricted to SAF-controlled states — illustrates a structural gap: civilians in RSF-controlled areas receive no equivalent international support. International actors must press for equitable access in line with international humanitarian law.

3. Support Emergency Agricultural Financing with Forced-Disaster Debt Relief

The Abri farmers case reflects a system that prosecutes victims of forced disasters. Agricultural sector support must including: (a) restructuring or writing off debts for farmers who failed due to conflict-related causes; (b) extending loan terms to align with agricultural production cycles (12+ months).

4. Invest in Standalone Solar Energy as a Food Security Driver

Sudan has among the highest solar irradiance rates in the world (15 GW potential vs 190 MW installed). Solar irrigation pumps can enable agricultural production independently of a devastated grid. Required actions: (a) support solar panel import supply chains; (b) concessional financing (below 10%, 12+ month terms); (c) fund maintenance networks and technical training.

5. Link Investment and Trade to Gold Sector Accountability

The RSF's use of mining and smuggling networks to finance its operations — costing the state an estimated ~$7 billion annually — requires a coordinated international response. Gold destination countries (principally the UAE) must be engaged diplomatically to support CBoS registration requirements and enforce provenance standards.

6. Leverage the Nairobi Declaration Toward an Economically Grounded Ceasefire

The Nairobi Declaration (23 May) provides a diplomatic framework that should be actively supported. Any ceasefire — even a temporary humanitarian pause — would enable summer farming and reopen supply corridors. Any framework must be linked to: (a) protection of agricultural infrastructure; (b) unimpeded humanitarian access; (c) restoration of electricity to productive sectors.

Section 5 — Outlook: June 2026

Focus Area	Expected Trend
Exchange Rate	Parallel market likely to exceed 4,500 SDG/USD driven by Eid al-Adha seasonal demand. CBS circulars may have a limited moderating effect.
Inflation	Continued upward pressure — fuel and food price trajectories depend on regional security dynamics and import supply chain integrity.
Agriculture	June marks the start of the summer planting season. Without emergency financing, cultivated areas will remain far below potential. FAO's 40% loss warning is likely to materialize.
Food Security	The onset of the lean season (June–September) will worsen IPC indicators. Risk of expanding IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) zones is real.
Electricity	No structural improvement expected without security stabilization. Solar energy imports will continue rising, but financing barriers limit access for marginalized farmers.
Political / Diplomatic	The Nairobi Declaration is unlikely to translate into a ceasefire without effective international pressure. Military escalation in Kordofan remains the greatest macroeconomic risk.
War Economy	RSF revenue streams in Darfur and Kordofan expected to continue strengthening. Living conditions in RSF-controlled areas expected to continue deteriorating.

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