

Women, Peace, and Security in Sudan

Priorities for a Sustainable Future

November 2025

| Sudan

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Acronyms

AU	African Union	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome	NGO	Nongovernmental organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	RSF	Rapid Support Forces
CSO	Civil society organization	SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
ERRs	Emergency response rooms	SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights	SIHA	Strategic Initiative for Women in Africa
GBV	Gender-based violence	U.N.	United Nations
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus	UNSCR	U.N. Security Council Resolution
ICC	International Criminal Court	WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
IDP	Internally displaced person	YCON	Youth Citizens Observers Network

Executive Summary

Context

Sudanese women have long been at the forefront of humanitarian response, peacebuilding, and advocacy, often stepping into leadership roles in the face of extreme adversity. However, their roles in peace processes remain severely marginalized. This exclusion persists within the formal negotiations and political structures, where women often are sidelined in decision-making despite their proven resilience and capacity for leadership. The ongoing violence, systemic discrimination, and forced displacement resulting from Sudan's conflict have impacted women disproportionately while also exacerbating existing gender inequalities and creating new challenges.

As the conflict has intensified, the focus of Sudanese women's advocacy has shifted from gender equality and political participation to urgent survival and protection needs. The escalation of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced displacement, and the loss of livelihoods have made it more difficult for women to prioritize their long-term peacebuilding goals.

In the summer of 2025, The Carter Center undertook intensive survey research to explore the experiences of and challenges faced by women both within Sudan and in the countries where the majority of forcefully displaced citizens have sought refuge. These consultations, across diverse settings, highlight the evolving gender dynamics in the context of Sudan's ongoing conflict. The findings identify both opportunities and challenges faced by women as they navigate the complexities of conflict and displacement while striving for sustainable peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. *Their experiences and recommendations underscore the urgent need to integrate gender-sensitive approaches into peace processes, ensuring that women's experiences, needs, and perspectives are incorporated at every stage of rebuilding Sudan.*

Widespread sexual and gender-based violence, forced abductions, and the destruction of infrastructure essential to women's livelihoods are among the most devastating aspects of the conflict. These forms of violence not only inflict physical and psychological harm but also compound women's economic marginalization, making it more difficult for them to access resources, education, and political participation. In this context, Sudanese women's role in peacebuilding becomes even more critical, as they are not only responding to the immediate humanitarian needs but also advocating for long-term justice, gender equality, and accountability.

Deep cuts to international aid funding in 2025 have further compounded these challenges. The scaling down of women-led projects by 50-70% because of severe financial constraints has significantly weakened the capacity of these organizations to carry out their critical work. With remaining resources being directed primarily toward general humanitarian aid, Sudanese women's initiatives face even greater difficulties in sustaining their leadership roles and advancing peacebuilding efforts. This funding shortfall is particularly acute in refugee and internally displaced persons camps, where the gendered impact of the conflict is most pronounced. Research participants consistently emphasized the need for gender-sensitive approaches in humanitarian assistance, highlighting the disproportionate risks that women face in these environments, ranging from sexual violence to the lack of access to essential services such as health care, education, and legal protection.

This report underscores the urgent need to recognize and amplify the voices of women in peace negotiations, to secure the resources necessary to support their leadership in rebuilding Sudan, and to ensure that their priorities, ranging from legal reforms to economic empowerment and protection from violence, are fully integrated into the broader peacebuilding agenda. The strength and determination of women, though often unacknowledged, is indispensable for sustainable peace and recovery in Sudan.

Objective and Scope of the Study

This Carter Center report is the third in a series exploring various dimensions of Sudan's ongoing conflict and its impact on civic actors. Building on previous studies, such as "Voices Beyond the Battlefield: Sudanese Civic Actors in Wartime and Diaspora," this report focuses on the role of Sudanese women in the context of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Unlike earlier studies, which focused on civic actors more broadly, this report draws on in-depth consultations with women across Sudan and key refugee-hosting countries – Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Chad – as well as a robust desk research component that examined existing literature, policy documents, and international frameworks related to Sudanese women and peacebuilding.

The study aims to document the complex, multifaceted realities of Sudanese women's lives as they navigate the hardships of war, displacement, and gender-based violence. It examines how women continue to lead peace efforts and advocate for justice despite the persistent challenges of patriarchal structures, exclusion from formal political processes, and systemic violence. The Carter Center employed a rigorous, evidence-based approach, combining qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and consultations with desk research on the existing legal, policy, and academic landscape, to offer a comprehensive view of Sudanese women's leadership in peace processes.

Building on previous findings, the report also provides recommendations for international stakeholders, including policymakers, donors, and regional organizations, on how to support and integrate women's leadership in peacebuilding initiatives. By amplifying the voices of women, this report contributes to the growing body of research on women's roles in conflict resolution and recovery and provides a strategic roadmap for ensuring that their perspectives are central to efforts aimed at securing lasting peace in Sudan.

Key Findings

- **Women play a crucial role in peacebuilding.** Sudanese women are integral to peacebuilding and recovery efforts, yet their contributions remain underrecognized and underfunded. As first responders to humanitarian crises, advocates for justice, and key actors in local peace initiatives, women have demonstrated remarkable resilience and leadership. However, entrenched patriarchal systems, political exclusion, and escalating violence continue to hinder their full participation in formal peace processes and governance. Despite these barriers, women's grassroots efforts, such as local peace committees, advocacy groups, and psychosocial support networks, play a pivotal role in mitigating conflict and fostering social cohesion.

- **Legal barriers and gaps in the WPS agenda underscore the systemic exclusion of women from peace processes and highlight the need for targeted reforms to ensure their full participation and access to justice.**

The ongoing conflict has exacerbated gender-based violence, including widespread rape, abductions, and forced displacement. Legal barriers – such as the failure to ratify international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and amend discriminatory laws – restrict women’s access to justice and limit their participation in peacebuilding. Furthermore, Sudan’s National Action Plan for the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 has stalled, preventing the effective integration of gender-sensitive strategies in peace processes.

- **Women’s involvement must go beyond symbolic representation to ensure their direct engagement in negotiations, decision-making, and the shaping of post-conflict governance structures, ensuring that peace agreements are inclusive and sustainable.**

Women’s inclusion in peace negotiations is essential to achieving a durable and inclusive peace. Sudanese women have repeatedly demonstrated their capacity to engage in peace processes, as seen in their participation in the 2024 Geneva talks. However, the international community should prioritize the meaningful inclusion of women in all stages of peacebuilding to ensure that agreements reflect the needs and rights of all Sudanese citizens. This includes not only the design of the peace process, but also its implementation and ongoing management. Women should be involved in shaping the framework for negotiations, ensuring that the terms of agreements are effectively executed, and participating in the long-term monitoring and support necessary to sustain peace.

- **Legal and institutional reforms are needed to ensure gender equality and protect women’s rights.**

While the 2019 Sudanese Constitution introduced some positive measures, such as a 40% women’s quota in the transitional legislative council, much remains to be done to create a legal framework that guarantees gender equality in Sudan. Legal reforms, particularly the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (“Maputo Protocol”) and amendments to discriminatory family and inheritance laws, are essential to protecting women’s rights and enabling their active participation in governance and peacebuilding.

- **Regional and international support is essential to advance progress and ensure local ownership of peacebuilding efforts.**

International and regional initiatives, such as the African Union’s ongoing efforts and the work of organizations like U.N. Women, have made notable strides in supporting Sudanese women. However, the international community should take greater action to amplify women’s voices and ensure their inclusion in key peace negotiations, legal reforms, and policy decisions. Supporting women-led organizations and ensuring local ownership of peacebuilding efforts are crucial for the sustainability and effectiveness of peace initiatives.

Key Recommendations

The following key recommendations are presented to guide international stakeholders, donors, policymakers, and humanitarian agencies in providing effective support to Sudanese women, so they are empowered to play a central role in Sudan's peacebuilding and recovery processes.

Resources and Capacity Building

- **Increase financial support for women's organizations.** International actors should prioritize flexible, responsive funding mechanisms to enable Sudanese women's organizations to thrive despite limited resources. Such funding should be designed to meet the evolving needs of women-led initiatives and ensure their long-term sustainability. This includes supporting not only core operational costs but also capacity building for leadership development, organizational management, and community engagement.
- **Enhance women's active participation in peace and political processes.** International actors should invest resources in building women's capacity to fully engage in peacebuilding and facilitate platforms for direct engagement between women leaders and peace negotiators. Efforts to involve women in peacebuilding must go beyond superficial representation. Formal and informal mechanisms should deliberately bring women's perspectives – especially those of marginalized groups such as young women, women with disabilities, and women from rural or conflict-affected areas – into every stage of the process. Parallel capacity building programs are needed to equip women with practical skills in mediation, justice, legal documentation, donor engagement, and organizational management so they can shape post-conflict recovery, policy, and long-term peace initiatives in a meaningful way. Engaging male leaders and allies to champion women's participation further strengthens these efforts.
- **Provide legal and technical assistance.** To strengthen the impact of women's advocacy efforts, international actors should offer technical assistance to support local women's organizations in their legal and policy advocacy. This includes providing expertise on the ratification of the CEDAW, the amendment of discriminatory laws (such as the Personal Status Law), and the development of gender-sensitive legal frameworks. Building the capacity of local actors to engage with legal processes is essential for securing women's rights and promoting gender equality. Also, men in the legal and policy sectors should be encouraged to support and advocate for legal reforms that enhance women's rights, recognizing the importance of these changes for sustainable peace.
- **Support the development of leadership skills of youth and young women.** It is vital to include young women and youth-led organizations in the Women, Peace, and Security space. Their involvement in peacebuilding is critical to the long-term stability of Sudan. This should be in line with UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace, and security. It also is essential to involve young men alongside young women in peacebuilding initiatives to reshape the narrative around masculinity and foster a more inclusive approach to peace.

Thematic Initiatives

- **Strengthen GBV prevention and response.** International partners should take immediate steps to scale up efforts to address pervasive gender-based violence in Sudan, which has been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict. Support should focus on strengthening survivor services, including health care, legal aid, and psychosocial support. In parallel, empowerment initiatives for local women's organizations, particularly those engaged in GBV prevention and response, should be prioritized. Furthermore, secure digital platforms should be created to facilitate the reporting and documentation of GBV cases, ensuring survivors' safety and accountability for perpetrators. Male community leaders and influential male public figures should be involved in GBV prevention efforts. Their active participation in awareness-raising campaigns and advocacy can help shift attitudes toward violence and promote nonviolence.
- **Promote social cohesion and conflict resolution.** Given the deep-rooted divisions within Sudanese society, fostering social cohesion and reconciliation is crucial. International actors should invest in initiatives that promote dialogue between divided communities, with particular attention to women-led grassroots peacebuilding efforts. Women's organizations are uniquely positioned to bridge divides and foster community-driven solutions to conflict and displacement. These initiatives should prioritize inclusion, address the root causes of conflict, and contribute to long-term stability. Male leaders and men in affected communities should be trained to participate in reconciliation efforts. Engaging men in promoting social cohesion and resolving conflicts in nonviolent ways will strengthen the impact of peacebuilding initiatives.
- **Empower women to be leaders.** Women must be supported in developing the leadership skills necessary to engage in political decision-making and post-conflict reconstruction. This includes investing in mentorship and training programs tailored to equipping women with the tools they need to lead effectively in governance, peace processes, and rebuilding efforts. Leadership development initiatives should focus not only on formal political roles but also on community-level leadership, where women's influence is critical in fostering social change.

Policy and Practice

- **Advocate for legal and institutional reforms.** International stakeholders should prioritize continued advocating for legal and institutional reforms promoting gender equality and women's rights in Sudan. This includes supporting Sudanese women's advocacy efforts to align national laws with international frameworks such as UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW. Additionally, reform efforts should focus on amending discriminatory laws related to family rights, inheritance, and citizenship to ensure that women can fully participate in political, legal, and economic spheres. Encourage men policymakers and influential male figures to support these legal reforms. Men must become key advocates for the elimination of discriminatory laws.

- **Enhance coordination and collaboration.** To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of WPS initiatives, international and local actors should strengthen their coordination and collaboration. Sudanese women's organizations should be viewed as equal partners in the design and implementation of peacebuilding and recovery programs, not simply as recipients of external support. This collaboration must be based on respect for local knowledge and context, ensuring that initiatives are culturally relevant and responsive to the unique challenges faced by women in Sudan.
- **Adapt funding models to conflict conditions.** It is critical that funding models be adaptable to the dynamic and rapidly changing realities of conflict. International donors should provide flexible funding that can respond quickly to urgent needs while supporting long-term recovery initiatives. Immediate financial support is necessary to restore vital services for women, such as health care, GBV protection, and legal assistance. Furthermore, funding should prioritize long-term economic empowerment for women, which is crucial for their autonomy and agency in post-conflict Sudan. Ensure that funding models also support programs that engage men and boys in promoting gender equality, peacebuilding and women's empowerment.
- **Provide security grants for women human rights defenders.** Providing security grants for women human rights defenders and journalists, particularly those in displacement or asylum, is critical for ensuring their safety and continued advocacy work. This includes facilitating evacuation when necessary to protect those most at risk.

Cybersecurity

- **Protect women's organizations from digital threats.** Women's organizations in Sudan, especially those operating in conflict zones, are increasingly vulnerable to cybersecurity risks, including digital surveillance, cyberbullying, and online harassment. To protect these organizations and activists, international partners should provide cybersecurity training and tools to safeguard sensitive data and communications. This should include providing resources to ensure that women's voices can be heard without fear of reprisal, enabling them to engage fully in advocacy and peacebuilding efforts without the risk of online threats and digital violence. Men can play a key role in protecting women's organizations from digital threats by advocating for safe digital spaces, supporting digital literacy programs, and ensuring that the internet is a tool for empowerment, not harassment. Men in tech sectors should collaborate with women's organizations to provide cybersecurity tools and training.

Introduction

This report aims to further advance existing research on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Sudan, building on the works of national, regional, and international organizations in the field. Specifically, the report seeks to amplify the voices of Sudanese women – both within the country and in the diaspora – and bring their needs, agenda, and priorities to the forefront of ongoing efforts by the international community and donors. By focusing on WPS issues as identified and prioritized by Sudanese women, this report strives to enhance coordination, collaboration, and support for sustainable peacebuilding and recovery efforts in Sudan.

The report is informed by several key studies, including three recent papers from The Carter Center. These publications, released in August and September 2025, focused on the civic space in Sudan and explored opportunities for resilience and recovery amid the ongoing crisis. In addition, this report follows up on a June 2025 WPS report by the Youth Citizen Observers Network (YCON), which further highlights critical gaps and opportunities in Sudan's WPS agenda. Together, these documents provide a nuanced understanding of the evolving landscape of gender and peace in Sudan, which informed this report's research, findings, and recommendations.

Through a thorough consultation process, this report reflects the views of Sudanese women who, despite the structural barriers to equality and ongoing challenges of the conflicts, have continued to actively participate in peacebuilding, humanitarian work, and advocacy. The findings highlight the resilience and determination of Sudanese women to further this body of work while confronting the ongoing challenges they face, such as exclusion from peace processes, widespread sexual and gender-based violence, limited resources, and the pressing need for gender-sensitive strategies in humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. Building on these findings, the report outlines actionable priorities to guide future interventions and support for women in Sudan's peace and recovery process.

By emphasizing these key insights, the report aims to promote a more inclusive and effective strategy for WPS in Sudan, highlighting the critical contribution of Sudanese women to building a fair and enduring peace.

Research Rationale

Sudanese women continue to play a crucial role as first responders in the humanitarian crisis, peacebuilding efforts, and advocacy for justice. However, despite their significant contributions, they remain under-recognized, marginalized, misrepresented, or excluded from political participation and recovery efforts. Additionally, women's organizations face significant challenges due to a lack of resources and threats of violence and have been hit even harder by shrinking international funding for civil society work.

There is an urgent need to amplify the voices of Sudanese women, to highlight their current priorities, and to explore opportunities for international support and collaboration. This report documents the existing efforts by Sudanese women, highlights emerging challenges and gaps, and provides actionable recommendations for the international community and donors to better support these women in their peace and security efforts.

Methodology

This report draws on primary and secondary sources to highlight the voices of Sudanese women and explore their perspectives on WPS issues in Sudan and abroad.

While the term "diaspora" is used throughout this report, it is important to note that many Sudanese who have fled the country did not do so by choice. Many do not consider themselves permanently settled elsewhere. They exist in a state between displacement and exile, often

residing in neighboring countries, living in limbo and holding onto hopes of returning home. Our use of the term “diaspora” reflects this shifting and unsettled condition, rather than a stable or voluntary migration.

The methodology combines comprehensive consultations, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and extensive desktop review.

In June 2025, The Carter Center engaged with Sudanese women inside the country and in key diaspora countries, including Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Chad, where many displaced people have sought refuge in the ongoing conflict. These consultations aimed to capture the diverse experiences, needs, and challenges of women involved in peacebuilding, humanitarian efforts, and WPS-related work.

The research employed a four-pronged approach: structured interviews, focus group discussions, consultations, desk research, and analysis. Carter Center researchers held 60 structured interviews with Sudanese civic actors, including members of civil society organizations, community groups, and grassroots initiatives.

Also, the Carter Center held two in-person focus group discussions, one in Uganda (with 13 women) and one in Chad (with 17 women), with participants drawn from various sectors of Sudanese civil society. These discussions provided a platform for collective reflections on topics related to WPS, peacebuilding, and the challenges faced by women during conflict and post-conflict periods.

The research was further supported by desk review that examined the historical WPS context in Sudan, focusing on the period since the war’s outbreak in 2023. The review focused on reports, studies, and data from national, regional, and international organizations working on WPS in Sudan, providing context to the primary data and a broader understanding of the landscape.

The process also included extensive consultations with regional and international experts and representatives from organizations involved in WPS programming and policy. These interviews helped triangulate findings from Sudanese participants and offered insights into regional and international dynamics affecting WPS efforts.

All interviews and focus groups followed a semi-structured format, with open-ended questions focused on themes such as the evolving role for women in peace processes; justice and accountability; legal reforms; and the impact of international support. They were conducted in Arabic and English, with recordings made only after participants gave their consent. For confidentiality, participants’ identities are anonymized. Transcripts were analyzed qualitatively to identify themes, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for enhancing WPS efforts.

While the study captures diverse voices within Sudan and the diaspora, it is not statistically representative of all Sudanese women engaged in WPS. Security risks, logistical challenges, and the conflict’s rapid changes limited geographic scope. Where physical travel was not feasible, consultations and interviews were carried out online and in a hybrid setting (both in-person and

online). Nonetheless, the insights provide a valuable qualitative understanding of dynamics and inform future recommendations.

Context of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

The WPS agenda, established by a landmark U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) in 2000, emerged from the recognition that women worldwide are systematically excluded from decision-making in peace processes, gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched, and excessive resources are allocated to military and arms spending compared with investing in the promotion of gender equality and women's meaningful participation. The WPS agenda addresses the impact of armed conflicts on women, with a particular focus on their full participation as agents of peace, security, and justice, as well as on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations.

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action¹ in 1995, and following the UNSCR 1325, the international community has made significant strides in recognizing and increasing women's leadership, representation, and participation in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, and humanitarian action. However, despite these efforts, women's involvement in peace processes remains disproportionately low, and violence against women, particularly sexual violence, during armed conflict continues to be perpetrated with impunity.²

Studies underscore the significant impact that women's involvement in peace negotiations has on the success and durability of peace agreements. For example, a 2012 study of peace agreements found that when civil society actors are included in the peace deal, the risk of peace failing is reduced by 64%.³ Another study revealed that women's participation in peace negotiations increases by 20% the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years, and by 35% a peace agreement lasting 15 years.⁴ Despite these clear benefits, the Council on Foreign Relations found that women constituted, on average, less than 15% of negotiators between 1992 and 2019.⁵

The WPS agenda comprises a series of U.N. Security Council Resolutions that further develop the framework of women's involvement in peace processes.⁶ These include:

- **UNSCR 1820 (2008)**, which recognizes sexual violence in conflict as a war tactic and stresses its prevention as critical to international peace and security.

¹ For the full text of the Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, visit [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#).

² See <https://peacewomen.org/why-WPS/the-problem>.

³ See: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03050629.2012.659139>. Source: Joshi, M., & Loya, M. (2012). *Civil Society and Peace Agreements*. Peace and Conflict Studies, 18(2).

⁴ See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/womens-participation-peace-processes-is-not-only-right-its-way-to-lasting-peace>. Source: Council on Foreign Relations. (2019). *Women's Participation in Peace Processes: An Imperative for Lasting Peace*.

⁵ See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/womens-participation-peace-processes-is-not-only-right-its-way-to-lasting-peace>. Source: Council on Foreign Relations. (2019). *Women's Participation in Peace Processes: An Imperative for Lasting Peace*.

⁶ For the full texts of all the resolutions that make up the WPS agenda: <https://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions>.

- **UNSCR 1888 (2009)**, which focuses on ending impunity for sexual violence and strengthening the U.N.'s capacity to address these crimes.
- **UNSCR 1889 (2009)**, which introduces indicators to measure the implementation of UNSCR 1325.
- **UNSCR 1960 (2010)**, which establishes a system for accountability regarding conflict-related sexual violence.
- **UNSCR 2106 (2013)**, which stresses the importance of gender equality in the prevention of sexual violence in conflict.
- **UNSCR 2122 (2013)**, which reaffirms the importance of women's participation in all stages of conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery.
- **UNSCR 2242 (2015)**, which emphasizes the importance of women's involvement in combating terrorism and addressing sexual violence as a threat to peace and security.
- **UNSCR 2467 (2019)**, which calls for the support and protection of women's civil society organizations, with a focus on addressing the issue of children born from rape in conflict.
- **UNSCR 2493 (2019)**, which reaffirms the need for the full implementation of all previous WPS resolutions, specifically emphasizing women's participation in all peace processes supported by the U.N.

The localization of the WPS agenda has been crucial in addressing the unique needs of women in various national contexts. National action plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security are developed by countries to align their domestic policies with the WPS framework, and Sudan adopted its first plan in March 2020.⁷ This plan encompasses four key pillars of the WPS agenda: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and rehabilitation, with a focus on the active involvement of women in peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and decision-making, as well as the recognition of women's rights and the protection of women against gender-based violence.

The implementation of the WPS agenda in Sudan has been limited since its adoption, mainly due to recurring violent conflicts including the ongoing war. Although the Juba Peace Agreement explicitly references UNSCR 1325 and calls for increased representation of women in peace processes, Sudan's national action plan was interrupted by the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which escalated in 2023, and therefore had very limited implementation. While there have been limited gains in this area, opportunities exist to expand these efforts. A notable example are the 2024 Geneva talks. Although the negotiations did not fully materialize due to the absence of some parties, women were able to engage with the negotiators and the special envoy, conveying their views and recommendations. This demonstrates that the inclusion of Sudanese women in any future negotiations should be multi-pronged, including physical participation, engagement with negotiators and special envoys, as well as the presentation of previously agreed-upon written positions on key issues.

The ongoing war has led to severe humanitarian crises, with Sudanese women bearing the brunt of the impact. Respondents indicated the prevalence of widespread violations such as sexual violence, rape, abductions, and forced displacement. These violations, which amount to war

⁷ To see the Sudan National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325: [Sudan-nap-unscr-1325-wps-2020-2022-en.pdf](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/scr1325/sudan-national-action-plan-on-unscr-1325-2020-2022-en.pdf).

crimes and crimes against humanity, are being perpetrated with impunity. As Human Rights Watch has described, Sudan's conflict has escalated into one of the world's largest humanitarian catastrophes, with women's bodies become primary targets of systematic violence.⁸ Recent events in El Fasher further underscore the extent of these human rights violations and the alarming levels of impunity.

Sudan's legal context also plays a critical role in shaping its WPS landscape. Customary laws and discriminatory statutes, including the Personal Status Law, the 1991 Criminal Act, and the 1998 Public Order Law, have an adverse effect on women's rights and freedoms. These laws, which govern aspects of women's personal, public and social lives, institutionalize gender-based discrimination. More significantly, the enforcement and application of these laws further exacerbate barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment, limiting women's autonomy and participation in peace processes and humanitarian efforts.

Sudan is a signatory to several international and regional human rights instruments that protect women's rights. The country had previously expressed its intention to commit to more WPS initiatives. The Sudanese Constitution of 2019 made significant strides toward gender equality, including provisions for the protection of women's rights and the establishment of a 40% quota for women in the anticipated transitional legislative council. Nonetheless, several urgent legislative reforms are still needed, such as ratifying CEDAW and revising discriminatory laws such as the Personal Status Law, the Criminal Code, and the Employment Act, and the legislature is not yet in place. Sudan has yet to accede to the Maputo Protocol on women's rights, despite its signature.

Sudan's current context requires urgent attention to these legal and institutional gaps, alongside continued advocacy for women's participation in all stages of peacebuilding and governance. Furthermore, regional agreements and international frameworks must be leveraged to pressure Sudan's government to uphold its commitments to women's rights and expedite the legal and political reforms necessary for a gender-responsive peace process.

Regional and international initiatives also provide valuable momentum for advancing the WPS agenda in Sudan. The Kampala Declaration of 2024, which brought together more than 60 Sudanese women, emphasizes the need for international solidarity and support in amplifying women's voices in the ongoing peace process.⁹ Additionally, the WPS Steering Committee for Sudan, a collaborative initiative involving the African Union, the U.N, and regional organizations, has played a crucial role in providing recommendations and facilitating dialogue among Sudanese women and international actors. Sudan has ongoing processes related to WPS, with increasing recognition that violations against women have risen to the level of war crimes

⁸ See <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/sudan>.

⁹ The dialogue was part of efforts by the African Union in collaboration with key partners, including FemWise-Africa, the AU Gender, Peace and Security Program, the African Women's Leadership Network, U.N. Women, and Denmark, to ensure the inclusion and leadership of women in Sudan's peace processes.

and crimes against humanity. Notably, several reports on conflict-related sexual violence have been published both nationally¹⁰ and internationally.¹¹

Several organizations, such as the SIHA Network, Darfur Women's Action Group, and the Al Jazira Observatory, are making significant strides in addressing sexual violence in Sudan. The Carter Center has been actively engaging with these groups, and their contributions are reflected throughout this report. International efforts also are pivotal in advancing peacebuilding and mediation, with organizations such as the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, Search for Common Ground, CMI Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security playing key roles.

Also, global bodies like UNDP, U.N. Women, the African Union, and IGAD continue to drive peace processes and support political participation in Sudan, recognizing the critical role of women in shaping both local and national efforts toward peace. Notably, the U.N. Resident Coordinator Office in Port Sudan has made commendable efforts in fostering coordination among international organizations working on WPS in Sudan, with an aim to enhance responses in the country and across the region. The Carter Center remains a part of this collaborative effort. Moreover, the International Federation for Human Rights has been instrumental in advocating for human rights and accountability, amplifying the voices of marginalized groups and promoting legal reforms that are essential for long-term peace and justice in Sudan.

These collaborative efforts underscore the importance of continuing to elevate the role of Sudanese women in the peace process, ensuring that their voices are not only heard but actively incorporated into negotiations, legal reforms, and policy discussions. The findings of this report complement these ongoing initiatives by identifying the needs of Sudanese women, amplifying their voices, and proposing concrete actions for the international community to support women's leadership in peacebuilding, justice, and legal reform.

Overview of Priorities for Sudanese Women

Amid the ongoing conflict and worsening humanitarian crisis, Sudanese women – both within the country and across the diaspora – have articulated their most pressing needs. Their voices highlight the urgency of addressing both immediate relief and long-term transformation, offering a roadmap for action. A key priority is humanitarian assistance that is responsive to women's specific needs. Aid must be gender-responsive, recognizing the distinct challenges faced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas. Support for women-led organizations already working on the ground is essential, as they have the local knowledge and capacity to direct resources where they are needed most. Effective humanitarian response also requires better coordination among international agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and local groups. When these actors align their efforts, resources can be directed more efficiently, duplication reduced, and the overall impact can be increased.

¹⁰ For various reports on conflict-related sexual violence in Sudan by the SIHA Network, visit [Home | Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa | SIHA](#).

¹¹ To see a report by Amnesty International titled "They Raped All of Us" released in April 2025, visit [Sudan: "They Raped All of Us": Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Sudan - Amnesty International](#).

Protection is another major concern. In a conflict where women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and human trafficking, there is a clear demand for stronger safeguards. Communities are calling for robust mechanisms to shield women from these atrocities, recognizing that safety is a prerequisite for any meaningful progress. Furthermore, the protection of women human rights defenders and activists who face heightened risks – both because of their gender and their advocacy work – is essential. Providing personal security and legal protections and fostering collective solidarity is crucial for maintaining a thriving civil society. Digital security also is a key component of any protection strategy, as women are increasingly targeted by online violence and hate speech. Ensuring their ability to organize, speak out, and lead without fear is critical. Additionally, any security intervention, whether physical or digital, must be tailored to the specific needs of marginalized groups, including women with disabilities, those living in refugee camps, and unaccompanied children, who face unique vulnerabilities.

While relief and safety are vital, they are not enough on their own to lay the foundations for lasting peace. Peacebuilding, long-term stability, and recovery sit at the core of women's vision for Sudan's future. Women want to be active participants in peace processes and transitional justice, not merely symbolic figures. Their inclusion ensures that peace agreements are grounded in lived experiences, making them more sustainable and effective.

Healing requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the needs of survivors, identifies cultural factors contributing to a conflict, and strengthens societal resilience. Women highlight the importance of coordinated health care, trauma-informed counseling, and accessible legal aid so that survivors can reclaim their dignity and seek justice. For survivors of sexual violence, access to comprehensive medical, psychosocial, and legal support is essential. Addressing the root causes of conflict, such as racism, discrimination, and ethnic and religious tensions, requires a holistic approach. Women's active participation in confronting these issues is critical to building inclusive, lasting peace. Women's leadership in early warning systems also is a key resilience measure, as their knowledge of local community dynamics allows for quicker identification of emerging threats, allowing preemptive action before crises escalate.

Another vital priority is the financing of WPS organizations. Flexible and increased funding enables civil society groups – whether they focus on peacebuilding, responding to SGBV, or supporting women's empowerment – to operate efficiently and effectively. These organizations rely on funding that matches the scale of their ambitions.

Finally, economic empowerment is seen by the Sudanese as fundamental to recovery. When women have the means to sustain their families through livelihoods, skills development, and entrepreneurship, entire communities can achieve stability and hope. Investment in women's economic independence contributes directly to the rebuilding of homes, schools, and markets, benefiting the broader society.

These intertwined priorities illustrate a clear, actionable blueprint for recovery: a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach that bridges immediate humanitarian needs with long-term peacebuilding and economic revitalization. By honoring the needs, rights, and contributions of Sudanese women at every stage, Sudan can move toward a future where recovery is equitable

and enduring. Importantly, all efforts to empower and elevate women's voices should be accompanied by conversations with – and buy-in from – male counterparts. Male community leaders and public figures should be involved in supporting all issues affecting women, including their safety, GBV prevention efforts, gender-sensitive humanitarian aid, healing, and economic empowerment, among others.

Insights from Sudan and the Diaspora

Despite the immense challenges of the ongoing conflict, Sudanese women demonstrate remarkable resilience and leadership, driving peacebuilding efforts, humanitarian initiatives, and advocacy. However, they encounter significant barriers such as exclusion from peace negotiations, widespread gender-based violence, and a severe lack of resources and support. The findings underscore the urgent need for inclusive, gender-sensitive strategies that not only address immediate humanitarian concerns but also lay the groundwork for long-term recovery and sustainable peace. These insights highlight the crucial role of Sudanese women in shaping both their country's future and the broader regional peace process.

Overarching Findings

Although Sudanese women are disproportionately affected by violence, they have become vital to critical response efforts, demonstrating extraordinary resilience and resourcefulness. In a rapidly changing environment, women have established grassroots initiatives such as the community kitchens known as Takayas and emergency response rooms (ERRs). These projects, organized with limited technical expertise and minimal financial resources, demonstrate the determination of women who continue to provide support to their families and communities despite overwhelming adversity.

In conversations with women across Sudan and the region, a clear consensus emerged: Sexual violence has reached unprecedented levels. Local civil society organizations are working hard to provide medical care and psychosocial support to survivors, but these groups are unable to cover the vast geographical spread of the violence. Threats to women's safety also have moved online, with women human rights defenders reporting increasing digital threats due to their gender and activism.

The situation is complicated further by widescale, severe funding cuts in 2025, which led to the scaling down or elimination of up to 70% of women-led projects. The remaining funds are directed primarily toward general humanitarian aid, which respondents stress must be provided with a gender-sensitive approach. This is particularly crucial in refugee and IDP camps, where women face heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and critical gaps in essential services. Protection measures, dignity kits, and reliable SGBV support are lifesaving necessities. Without a clear focus on the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls, humanitarian responses risk missing those who need help most. Also, targeted support for organizations working with disabled populations is vital to ensure that disabled women are included in immediate crisis responses and long-term peacebuilding efforts.

The implementation of regional and international WPS frameworks offers a key opportunity for Sudan. By raising awareness of these frameworks, advocating for Sudan's ratification of pending treaties, and incorporating them into negotiations, women's rights can be integrated into peace

agreements. The effective promotion of WPS commitments would underscore Sudan's dedication to a gender-inclusive peace agenda.

Despite their critical contributions, Sudanese women continue to be excluded from formal peace and mediation processes. The absence of civil society actors, combined with the largely symbolic inclusion of women in negotiations, risks sidelining gender-specific perspectives and needs. Respondents advocate for multi-pronged strategies to ensure women's meaningful participation: Women must not only be heard but also must be involved in decision-making. Protecting the gains already made and advancing a genuinely gender-sensitive peacebuilding agenda is crucial.

The gender-insensitivity of Sudan's judicial system – and the prevalence of impunity for wrongdoers – leaves women with limited access to justice. A comprehensive, well-funded support network is urgently needed to protect survivors, to provide essential services, and to hold perpetrators accountable. This study found that many piecemeal efforts in this regard. Even while the national judiciary is defunct, the documentation of gender-based crimes, including sexual slavery, trafficking, and the sale of women and girls, remains critical. Coordinated and structured documentation could support future prosecutions in regional or international courts. Building the legal capacity of local lawyers, judges, and prosecutors regarding the supporting documentation needed, as well as equipping women's groups to engage with legal mechanisms, will lay the groundwork for accountability when the judicial system is eventually restored.

In addition to lobbying for justice and accountability for ongoing violations, steps should be taken immediately to address these issues, despite current hostilities. Creating a more inclusive and credible process begins with integrating traditional justice mechanisms, exploring amnesty options, compensation, and individual/community reparations within the WPS framework, and ensuring that women's experiences shape the design of justice. Early preparation is key to ensuring that women's needs are at the heart of future mechanisms of justice.

Finally, the private sector and professional bodies, which traditionally have been sidelined in peace talks, hold untapped potential for economic recovery and social cohesion. Their involvement in peace and recovery strategies could drive broader societal support, contributing to sustainable stability in a post-war Sudan.

Through innovation, courage, and relentless advocacy, Sudanese women are shaping both immediate relief efforts and the long-term vision for a peaceful, just nation. Recognizing and amplifying their leadership, through gender-sensitive aid, adequate funding, legal accountability, and inclusive peace processes, can transform the resilience of today into lasting transformation for Sudan's future.

Country-Specific Findings

The following findings highlight the diverse operational contexts and challenges faced by Sudanese women involved in WPS initiatives, both within Sudan and in neighboring countries. Each region presents its own set of opportunities and challenges in responding to the ongoing conflict and addressing the specific needs of women. Women in Sudan have highlighted the importance of support tailored to their immediate needs and crisis response, while those in neighboring countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt, South Sudan, Kenya, and Chad often

find themselves balancing the provision of urgent assistance with their contributions to long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Sudanese women in the diaspora confront unique challenges, shaped by the political, legal, and social contexts of their host countries. In Uganda, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan, women face challenges including limited humanitarian aid, economic vulnerability, legal barriers, and threats of violence. Despite myriad challenges, they continue to play an essential role in supporting Sudan's peace and recovery. Many are leading crucial peacebuilding initiatives, organizing regional networks, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies and funding.

In Sudan, respondents emphasized the dire working conditions and lack of funding for women-targeted support. Women are operating on the frontlines of humanitarian response, dealing with insecurity and a lack of resources to provide adequate humanitarian support. As one respondent working in an emergency response room said in July 2025: *"We are providing food and health support to people from our community. It's a 24-hour job. We decided to establish a section within our base ERR that will focus on women. The main support came from the diaspora; young people outside the country have been supporting us."*

However, the drastic reduction in funding since early 2025 has severely limited their capacity to provide comprehensive assistance, especially for women. Respondents expressed frustration over the lack of targeted support for gender-specific needs, which is further compounded by the stigma surrounding sexual violence. One respondent shared: *"It is our culture and tradition not to talk about rape and sexual violence. When such things happen, women just disappear. ... You do not know whether they are alive or whether family members relocated them, or what happened to them."* This reality highlights the urgent need for both funding and justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, with many organizations unable to meet the overwhelming demand for support.

In contrast, **Uganda** offers a somewhat more favorable operational environment for Sudanese women, compared with other regions. For example, in the Kiryandongo refugee settlement, families are provided with small plots of land to grow food, which offers a level of economic independence not available in many other refugee settings. Sudanese women in Uganda have the opportunity to organize more effectively around long-term peacebuilding goals, including localizing WPS, reviewing family laws, and creating a unified women's agenda for peace processes. One respondent shared: *"Regional networks would be beneficial for exchanging views and hearing others' experiences. The solidarity of women is important. We can utilize these engagements for advocacy at a regional level."* While funding remains a challenge and sexual exploitation and abuse persists, particularly among urban refugees, the ability to engage in long-term peacebuilding sets Uganda apart from other contexts, where women's efforts often are limited to immediate crisis management.

Ethiopia presents its own set of challenges, particularly related to complex residency requirements. Many Sudanese refugees, including women, face significant legal and economic vulnerabilities due to legal and registration status. This has created substantial barriers for civil society organizations working on WPS. Nevertheless, Sudanese women there have developed a

strong focus on economic recovery, with respondents advocating for economic activities tailored to women and youth.

“This war has been transformative for women,” one respondent shared. Other respondents agreed that the ongoing conflict has provided opportunities for and empowered women, increasing their resilience. They are now doing this work themselves – turning schools into camps, living in shelters, and doing business. *“We haven’t seen women-led businesses flourishing like they are now, especially in Kampala and Cairo. They are opening stores more,”* said one Sudanese respondent in Addis Ababa. The need for psychosocial support for women who have endured traumatic journeys from Sudan to Ethiopia also was highlighted. As in other regions, sexual exploitation and abuse remain serious concerns, and support for women in Ethiopia would benefit from focusing on both economic empowerment and enhanced capacity building to address GBV.

In **Egypt**, respondents noted a more limited space for WPS actors, with the return of many Sudanese refugees adding complexity to the situation by creating a volatile, shifting population with unpredictable needs, while also straining already limited resources and support systems for both refugees and host communities. Even with limited space and logistical barriers, local initiatives led by Sudanese women and youth have had tangible success in resolving deep-rooted conflicts. One respondent living in Egypt shared an example of successful grassroots peacebuilding, recounting a two-year effort to mediate between two conflicting tribes. *“We started bottom-up, until we reached Al Nadhir (the highest authority in a tribe). With their approval, we worked in these tribes. These two tribes never fought again.”*

This experience underscores the importance of empowering local actors through training and support to strengthen their resilience and capacity to resolve conflict, even in complex and strained environments. Despite these successes, respondents highlighted the need for training for youth and women to enhance their economic resilience, particularly for those preparing for post-conflict conditions. While grassroots peacebuilding continues, the limited civic space and logistical barriers challenge efforts to extend and sustain support.

In **South Sudan**, the cross-border movement of Sudanese women and girls is a major concern. According to respondents, many women endure dangerous journeys marked by reports of rape, abductions, and robberies, with significant gaps in medical and psychosocial support for survivors. According to one respondent: *“NGOs, government agencies, and U.N. bodies should focus on expanding SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and response services in Sudan, along migration routes, and in border areas.”* The porous borders between South Sudan and Sudan exacerbate vulnerabilities, leaving women and girls vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

Kenya, by contrast, has favorable civic space for Sudanese WPS organizations, with a vibrant civil society actively engaged in advocacy through film, art, and music. However, logistical barriers, such as challenges in officially registering civil society organizations, limit the operational flexibility and scope of impact of some CSOs.

Kenya also hosts many regional and international actors, including several U.N. agencies, including the U.N. Children’s Fund, the U.N. Population Fund, and U.N. Women, providing a valuable platform for cross-border collaborations, though respondents indicated that coordination needed improvement. According to one respondent: *“There is a need for better coordination among the international community in the provision of support.”* Another highlighted the importance of revisiting the 2024 Geneva process priorities to align them with current realities. While cross-border collaboration is valuable, funding shortages and coordination gaps remain significant obstacles to its success.

Finally, in **Chad**, humanitarian conditions in refugee camps such as Adre were described as dire, with critical shortages of healthcare services, especially for reproductive health. *“The health care available here in the camp covers only 2% of its population; this affects women’s health, and especially reproductive health,”* one respondent said. Women in Chad expressed an urgent need for protection services for women suffering from domestic violence and sexual violence within the camps, as well as child protection measures for unaccompanied children who are vulnerable to exploitation.

Despite these severe challenges, local peace initiatives continue to make strides, such as the creation of a dialogue center to foster communication among tribes. One resident of a refugee camp shared: *“Despite the tribal problems that we had in Al Genina previously, we succeeded in establishing the sustainable dialogue center to create a space for young people to sit together and have a dialogue.”*

Support in Chad would benefit from bolstering health care, expanding protection services, and continuing to develop these local peacebuilding efforts, which are vital for long-term recovery.

Identified Gaps and Emerging Issues in WPS

Many of the gaps identified in the current response to women’s organizations, as highlighted by consultations, reflect broader challenges within Sudanese civil society, which have been documented in The Carter Center’s previous research papers. This section focuses specifically on how these challenges intersect with the WPS agenda and highlights gender-specific issues that require targeted attention and action.

The response to WPS issues in Sudan has been significant; however, it remains largely fragmented and uncoordinated. This lack of collaboration has led to duplication of efforts and overstretched resources. To maximize impact, there is an urgent need for more strategic partnerships among regional, international, and local actors. Aligning messaging, funding, and support for Sudanese-led initiatives will ensure a more effective, cohesive response to the pressing needs of women in the region.

While many initiatives have focused on building the capacity of Sudanese women, there is still a critical need for further capacity-building programs. These initiatives should focus on empowering women with skills in key areas such as mediation, peace processes, justice efforts, legal documentation, donor engagement, and organizational management. Building these capabilities is essential to ensure that women can play an active and informed role in post-conflict recovery and long-term peacebuilding.

A recurring theme throughout the Carter Center’s consultations, not specific to women, is the need to develop more responsive and flexible funding mechanisms throughout the entire project lifecycle – from identifying priorities to project conceptualization, grant application procedures, funds transfer, implementation, and monitoring. An agile funding approach will enable local initiatives to rapidly adapt to the changing needs on the ground, ensuring timely and relevant interventions in an unpredictable and fast-evolving environment

The visibility of women’s experiences and their direct participation in peace processes remains a critical issue. Respondents highlighted a growing sense that the war in Sudan has been overshadowed by other global crises, such as those in Ukraine and Gaza. Women need to be actively included in peace talks and negotiations. There is an urgent call for greater advocacy to ensure that women are full participants in peace processes.

The ongoing conflict in Sudan has polarized the women’s movement, often along political, ethnic, or tribal lines. A significant issue is the absence of clear WPS priorities and minimum goals. While there have been efforts to create a “women’s agenda,” these initiatives have struggled due to a lack of coordination, resulting in fragmented and conflicting visions. It is essential to establish platforms where women can unite across political and ethnic divides to forge a common agenda on WPS issues. This shared vision would help ensure women’s effective participation in future negotiations and the broader recovery process.

Emerging Issues

Conversations with Sudanese women highlighted some of the most pressing WPS issues that have emerged since the war erupted. Prior to the conflict, the key concerns were centered on advocating for gender equality and equal participation across all spheres of social life. A significant focus was placed on securing greater representation in decision-making spaces and ensuring that women’s voices were included in political processes.

However, as the conflict escalated, the focus shifted significantly. Issues that once centered on equality and participation in social and political life were overtaken by urgent humanitarian needs that exceed those of the general population. The war brought about a devastating increase in sexual and gender-based violence; women have been increasingly targeted as part of the conflict itself, as sexual violence became a weapon of war. This shift highlights a profound change in priorities, from gender equity to survival and protection in the face of unprecedented violence.

In addition to immediate humanitarian needs, there also are long-term ramifications stemming from the violence, including displacement, loss of livelihoods, and the ongoing trauma faced by survivors of violence. Displacement in particular has had a severe impact on women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by the breakdown of social structures and the loss of access to critical resources like health care, education, and economic opportunities.

In many instances, displaced women and girls face increased exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, including exploitation and trafficking. Their displacement also means the loss of safe spaces, further deepening their vulnerability. The lack of stable housing, and the absence of

basic services in refugee and IDP camps, contribute to insecurity, making it more difficult for women to rebuild their lives. Moreover, the loss of livelihoods and land leaves women with limited opportunities to regain economic independence.

The following issues have emerged:

Rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence committed in the context of armed conflict are serious violations of international humanitarian law that amount to war crimes. They also violate several human rights, including the rights to equality and nondiscrimination, to physical integrity, and the prohibition of torture and other ill treatment. The sexual violence cases documented in a 2025 Amnesty International report¹² are detailed and include evidence collected by other human rights organizations and U.N. mechanisms since the onset of the conflict in Sudan in April 2023. The findings suggest that the acts of rape and sexual slavery may have been committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack by the Rapid Support Forces against the civilian population of Sudan.

Although sexual violence cases often are linked to the RSF and allied militias, the 2025 OHCHR report indicates that the Sudanese Armed Forces and their affiliates also have been involved in serious violations, including sexual violence.¹³

The pervasive nature of sexual violence, particularly sexual slavery and rape, committed by both RSF and SAF forces, underscores the urgent need for accountability and the establishment of comprehensive protection mechanisms for women in Sudan. These crimes, recognized as both crimes against humanity and war crimes under the International Criminal Court statute, highlight the critical importance of documentation efforts to meet the evidentiary standards necessary for potential future prosecutions. Respondents in Chad have called explicitly for training on the intersection of sexual slavery and cybersecurity, as well as the practical provision of tools such as laptops and phones to improve documentation efforts.

Meanwhile, the issue of human trafficking, particularly of women and girls, is escalating rapidly. Reports from El Gezira and other regions indicate an alarming increase in trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriages, and sexual slavery. One organization alleged the sale of women and girls in markets in Nyala. To address this, there is an urgent need for training programs that equip Sudanese women to identify, document, and report trafficking cases to meet international legal standards for adjudication.

Given the challenges posed by ongoing conflict and limited resources, it is equally important to focus on community-based approaches, building local capacity and strengthening partnerships with international organizations to support law enforcement efforts and support survivors. These actions could contribute to the long-term goal of preventing its escalation. While much of the attention surrounding sexual violence in Sudan has focused on women and girls, it is becoming increasingly clear that men and boys also are victimized on a much larger scale than previously

¹² [Sudan: “They Raped All of Us”: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Sudan - Amnesty International](#)

¹³ See U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2025). *Accelerating Action for Sudanese Women Amid Conflict: Statement by U.N. OHCHR*. Retrieved from [Accelerating Action for Sudanese Women Amid Conflict - Statement by the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan | OHCHR](#).

reported. The Institute for Security Studies highlighted that sexual violence against men in conflict is a significant issue, but humanitarian responses and media coverage often overlook it. To address this, more attention and resources are needed to document and support male survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones.

Also, Sudanese medical professionals raised a concerning issue: the connection between conflict-related sexual violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. As seen in previous regional conflicts, sexual violence increases the transmission of HIV, leaving survivors vulnerable to long-term health consequences. There is a critical need for further and better documentation of this issue, alongside the provision of HIV prevention and care services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

These gaps and emerging issues highlight the urgent need for a coordinated, gender-sensitive response to the crisis in Sudan. Addressing these challenges will require a collective effort from international, regional, and local actors to ensure the safety, empowerment, and inclusion of Sudanese women in all aspects of peace, recovery, and justice processes.

Proposed Support Areas (Immediate, Short-Term and Long-Term)

The situation for Sudanese women in conflict and displacement is evolving rapidly. As the war intensifies, so too does the complexity of women's needs. In response, the support required can be broken down into three distinct phases: immediate, short-term, and long-term. Each phase is critical to ensure women's safety, empowerment, and eventual participation in the rebuilding and peace processes in Sudan.

Immediate Technical Support Needs

Amid an ongoing crisis, Sudanese women face urgent and life-threatening challenges. The most pressing priority is to address these immediate needs, which can help save lives and begin the process of recovery.

- **Emergency medical and psychosocial support:** For survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, immediate access to medical and psychosocial care is critical. In these early stages, it is vital to establish mobile medical and psychosocial units that can quickly deploy to conflict-affected areas to offer rapid, accessible care, focusing on emotional, medical and psychological support. Trained doctors, counselors, social workers, and mental health professionals should be made available to provide immediate, trauma-informed care, ensuring that women have a safe space to process their experiences and begin healing. Virtual counseling services should be an option where physical presence is not possible, using secure telehealth platforms.
- **Rapid documentation and legal aid:** In conflict, the lack of documentation of sexual violence, including trafficking and sexual slavery, makes it harder for survivors to access justice. Training local women's groups, community leaders, and human rights defenders in basic documentation practices is critical to ensure that survivors' testimonies are captured safely and securely. Quick-response training programs should be organized to equip women's organizations with the tools to document SGBV and trafficking cases. Groups should be provided with secure documentation platforms and tools such as

encrypted smartphones and laptops to ensure that evidence meets the international legal standards required for prosecution.

- **Safe spaces and shelters:** Women and girls in conflict zones urgently need safe spaces to protect them from violence, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, and recruitment into armed groups. Safe spaces in high-risk areas should be created immediately, offering a secure environment where women can access medical, legal, and psychosocial support. These shelters could also provide basic lifesaving services such as food, water, and sanitation. Where practical, arrangements for evacuations of survivors should be made available through rapid response grants.
- **Enhanced security for women human rights defenders:** Security grants can be provided for women human rights defenders and journalists, particularly those in asylum or displacement, and facilitate their evacuation when necessary. It also is critical to support legal aid for women human rights defenders, activists, and organizations both in Sudan and the diaspora, helping them play a more effective role. This includes providing access to legal representation for women currently detained on charges of being “collaborators” with warring parties.

Medium-Term Technical Support Needs

Once immediate lifesaving interventions are in place, the focus can shift to structural reforms that contribute to stabilizing the situation and providing more sustainable support to women in conflict and displacement. This period should focus on the reforms required of the transitional period, empowering women’s organizations, strengthening their capacity, and ensuring that their efforts are more strategically aligned.

- **Development of a minimum WPS agenda:** Without a minimum, cohesive WPS agenda, women’s efforts are fragmented and their voices sidelined in peace processes. A long-term priority is to facilitate the creation of a minimum WPS agenda that is inclusive of all Sudanese women, regardless of political or ethnic affiliation. While respondents agreed that women are not a homogenous group, the need for minimum agreed-on positions on key issues was found necessary for upcoming national processes such as peacemaking, constitution-making, security sector reform, judicial reform, and national dialogues.
- **Provision of regional and international platforms:** It is essential to provide Sudanese women with platforms for learning best practices and building solidarity. This will amplify their voices as well as enhance effective inclusion and strategizing in the national processes that will emerge during the transitional period.
- **Sustained dialogue spaces for WPS agenda development:** Continuous consultations, workshops, and dialogues across Sudan and the diaspora are needed to develop a minimum WPS agenda. This agenda should be created with input from diverse women’s groups and should prioritize issues such as political representation, protection against sexual and gender-based violence, access to justice, and economic empowerment.

- **Technical support for discussions on gender justice options:** This support can include research/studies of transitional justice options, sharing of best practices from other countries, as well as mapping and review of traditional justice systems that can promote reconciliation and cohesion in the transitional period.
- **Sustainable support for women's organizations:** Women-led organizations are the backbone of peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, but many lack the organizational capacity and financial sustainability to continue their work in the long run. Long-term support is necessary to strengthen these organizations, helping them build capacity in areas like strategic planning, fundraising, and organizational governance so that they are self-sufficient and resilient in the face of future challenges. Building strong networks and regional partnerships will help women's groups remain connected and better able to advocate for their needs on the international stage.
- **Building capacity for local women's organizations:** In recognition of the high rates of violence in the war and postwar periods, it is a priority to create or refine tools that allow for gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting of SGBV cases, trafficking, and women's involvement in peace processes. This includes implementing gender-sensitive data collection methods, including mobile applications and online platforms that can be used by local organizations to report violence, track trends, and collect evidence. These tools should be designed with security in mind to ensure that the data is protected and that survivors' anonymity is preserved.
- **Cybersecurity and digital safety:** As the world becomes increasingly digitized, the risks for women's organizations operating in conflict zones also increase. Online hate speech, cyberbullying, and harassment are on the rise, and there is a growing need for digital safety and cybersecurity. Women's organizations should be equipped to communicate safely and document their work without putting themselves at risk of digital surveillance or attacks. This includes cybersecurity training for women's organizations, focusing on digital safety, the use of encrypted communication platforms, and how to secure sensitive data. Also, access to secure tools such as encrypted phones or laptops would help mitigate the risks associated with digital threats.
- **Legal advocacy and access to justice:** Supporting legal advocacy campaigns that push for justice for women and the provision of legal aid is essential to push for justice for women survivors of violence. This can include mobile legal clinics and virtual legal consultations that can support women in obtaining justice for SGBV and trafficking. Gender perspectives must be prioritized in the design and implementation of transitional justice processes. This would include the creation of women's spaces and sharing of learning from previous transitional justice experiences from other countries (truth commissions, memorialization, and justice processes).

Long-Term Technical Support Needs

For the long term, it is essential to ensure that Sudanese women not only are protected from violence but also are empowered to play a pivotal role in the peacebuilding and recovery efforts.

- **Strengthening legal frameworks and policies:** Long-term legal reform is necessary to ensure that women's rights are protected under Sudan's legal system. This includes advocating for gender perspectives to be taken into consideration in all stages of the permanent constitution-making process and review of personal status laws. Gender-based crimes should be recognized as crimes under international law, with survivors having access to justice and perpetrators held accountable.
- **Partnering with human rights organizations for legal reforms:** Collaborating with local human rights organizations, advocacy should focus on establishing laws that protect women and girls from trafficking, while ensuring that survivors receive compensation and legal aid.
- **Health care and psychosocial support infrastructure:** A sustainable health care and psychosocial support infrastructure is needed for a long-term recovery of survivors of sexual violence. This includes training local health providers in trauma-informed care, as well as creating systems for long-term medical and psychological rehabilitation. A national network of health care centers that specialize in providing care to survivors of sexual violence, offering both medical and psychosocial services, should be developed with community-based rehabilitation centers focused on long-term healing.

Financial Support and Resource Mobilization

Short-Term Financial Support (Immediate Needs)

By July 2025, consultations revealed that the response efforts of Sudanese women have been severely impacted by significant funding cuts over the previous years. Many organizations reported that 50-70% of their initiatives had either been completely shut down or drastically scaled back. This has led to reduced staff numbers, limited monitoring capacity, and hindered the ability to address urgent needs effectively. The shrinking of available resources has left many essential programs unable to function at full capacity, undermining progress in addressing the challenges faced by Sudanese women during the ongoing crisis.

To address this immediate gap, it is crucial to:

- **Provide rapid response grants to restore critical services** for women in conflict and displacement zones. This will focus on lifesaving interventions, such as emergency medical care, shelter and protection from gender-based violence.
- **Streamline funding processes**, making it easier and faster for women-led organization to access necessary resources to respond to the evolving crisis.
- **Direct funding to local women's organizations**, allowing them to operate more flexibly and respond quickly to urgent needs on the ground.
- **Use alternative payment methods** to improve accessibility to resources for displaced women.

Medium-Term Financial Support (Stabilizing and Building Capacity)

As the immediate needs are addressed, the focus should shift to stabilizing operations and empowering women's organizations to function effectively in the medium term.

- **Provide flexible funding models** that allow organizations to adapt to changing needs, including joint donor funding, to ensure alignment with priority themes and minimize delays in resource allocation.
- **Strengthen organizational capacity** by providing funding for programmatic work and empowering women's organizations to plan and implement long-term projects. This includes facilitating partnerships with intermediary organizations for more efficient fund distribution and monitoring.
- **Use payment methods that facilitate access to funding in conflict zones**, ensuring that resources reach the women who need them most without delays but at the same time do not compromise accountability and transparency.

The consultations also highlighted that the current funding models for Sudan have proven largely ineffective in responding to women's specific needs and the evolving context of the conflict. Respondents suggested that these models need to be rethought and restructured to better align with the current priorities facing women in Sudan.

Long-Term Financial Support (Sustainability and Recovery)

For the long term, it is essential to focus on the sustainability of women's organizations and ensure that they are positioned to not only recover from the crisis but also to lead efforts in peacebuilding, recovery, and gender equality in Sudan. Key areas of focus should include:

- **Long-term thematic funds for programmatic work** related to women's empowerment and peacebuilding.
- **Financial sustainability for women's organizations**, enabling them to continue their work beyond the immediate crisis period. This could include support for fundraising capacity, strategic planning, and organizational governance.
- **An infrastructure for health care and psychosocial support**, particularly for survivors of gender-based violence, so that sustainable systems can be established for long-term recovery.
- **Advocacy for legal reforms to ensure that women's rights are protected** under Sudan's legal system and that sexual violence and trafficking are treated as crimes under international law.

Women's key recommendations for new, flexible, and responsive funding models included joint donor funding, direct funding to women-led organizations, streamlined funding processes, and

flexible funding options. These approaches are crucial for both addressing immediate needs and ensuring that women's organizations can recover and continue their work in the long term.

Conclusions

Consultations with Sudanese women in Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt, Chad, and Kenya reveal their strong commitment to addressing and overcoming the diverse challenges caused by the ongoing war. Despite the immense risks and limited resources, Sudanese women remain at the forefront of peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and security efforts in their communities. Their contributions are crucial yet often undervalued and under-recognized. While they have been active in emergency response and humanitarian work, they remain marginalized in key areas such as peace negotiations, resilience building, and recovery processes.

Consultations with Sudanese women also revealed that their most pressing need is to increase their capacity to support survivors of sexual abuse and SGBV in general, together with enhancing their ability to continue their work on peacebuilding, respond to immediate health care and crisis needs, and increase their capacity to gather solid evidence of current crimes against women occurring in the conflict.

Despite their marginalization, Sudanese women have proven their resilience; their leadership in critical areas of humanitarian and peacebuilding work is indispensable. Regrettably, their efforts are increasingly impeded by severe funding cuts that have drastically reduced the capacity of many women-led initiatives. Many organizations have faced reductions in staff, resources, and operational reach, making it even harder for Sudanese women to respond effectively to the escalating humanitarian crisis.

The regional and international communities, along with donors, have played an essential role in amplifying the voices of Sudanese women and raising global awareness of their plight. However, the support remains fragmented, often duplicating efforts and failing to address the nuanced needs on the ground. Strategic collaboration – among international stakeholders and between donors and Sudanese CSOs – is sorely needed to better coordinate the response and maximize impact.

The current funding models for Sudan have proven inadequate in addressing the diverse and evolving needs of Sudanese women. Recommendations from consultations highlight the necessity for responsive, flexible funding that aligns with local priorities and that can be structured to support women-led organizations at the community level. Respondents called for joint donor funding, streamlined application processes, and greater collaboration in the design, prioritization, and implementation of programs.

Conversations conducted for this research also highlighted several emerging issues in the WPS landscape in Sudan, including an alarming increase in sexual slavery, trafficking, and sexual violence against men and boys. These complex and often underreported issues require urgent attention and documentation, alongside capacity building for women on the ground to effectively identify and address these crimes.

Sudanese women require ongoing support in the short, medium, and long term to address these challenges, amplify their voices, and ensure their full inclusion in peace, mediation, and recovery processes. *Only when women are empowered, resourced, and included will the prospects for peace, security, and long-term stability in Sudan and the wider region be enhanced.*

Recommendations

The following specific recommendations reflect the findings of the consultations and interviews with Sudanese women and civil society representatives, as well as interactions with regional and international actors and coalitions in various forums. The Carter Center offers these recommendations to enhance support for Sudanese women and ensure that WPS issues are kept at the forefront of ongoing and future responses.

For the Regional and International Communities

- **Amplify the voices of Sudanese women worldwide** by accurately conveying their experiences and highlighting their calls for action to address the crisis. Engage men and boys as allies in lifting the voices of Sudanese women and in advocating for the protection of women's rights and participation in peacebuilding.
- **Increase pressure on the warring parties** to stop hostilities, prevent the flow of weapons, and call for an immediate halt to all violations against women and girls, especially sexual violence and exploitation. Involve male community leaders in the calls to stop hostilities and violence against women and girls, emphasizing their role in challenging harmful gender norms.
- **Advocate for the immediate inclusion of Sudanese women** in all upcoming peace processes, ensuring that they participate effectively and that gender perspectives are integrated into mediation, negotiations, peace agreement monitoring, and transitional justice efforts. Facilitate dialogues with male leaders and decision-makers to highlight the importance of women's participation in peace processes, and the broader rebuilding efforts.
- **Strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships** by bringing women-led organizations, youth, civil society groups, and the private sector together. This collaborative approach can leverage diverse expertise, vast resources, and networks to coordinate action for women, peace, and security.
- **Lobby for the enforcement of international laws and humanitarian instruments**, especially the Geneva Conventions and protocols related to the rights of displaced persons and refugees, with a focus on women's rights, protection from violence, and equality. Encourage male leaders to use their platforms to advocate for the enforcement of laws that protect women and girls.
- **Provide platforms for Sudanese women to revise and update their priorities** and agendas developed by various women's initiatives to reflect the current situation, preparing them for future peace negotiations. Create parallel spaces for male leaders to

learn about and support the priorities identified by women, fostering joint efforts for peacebuilding.

- **Improve regional and international cooperation on long-term peace**, stability, and recovery in Sudan by encouraging coordinated efforts and avoiding fragmented forums and initiatives.
- **Support the role of Sudanese women in the country's long-term economic recovery**, recognizing their vital role in rebuilding the postwar economy. Focus on supporting agricultural projects and small businesses and providing flexible credit and financing options for women entrepreneurs.
- **Address disruptions in the education system** by advocating for alternative, flexible learning opportunities for women and girls, especially refugees and internally displaced persons. This should include vocational and technical training to empower women for the future. Promote male involvement in advocating for educational equity, ensuring that both men and women support initiatives for girls' and women's education.

For the Donor Community

- **Review WPS funding approaches** in Sudan to better reflect current realities and align with priorities identified by women.
- **Enable flexible donor engagement throughout the funding cycle**, from identifying priorities and conceptualizing projects to simplifying application processes, and easing grant awarding, fund transfer, and reporting mechanisms.
- **Consider establishing a joint donor funding initiative**, similar to the successful model in South Sudan, that channels resources into thematic areas of WPS to ensure more efficient fund allocation.
- **Prioritize direct funding to local women-led organizations**. These funds should include a mix of long-term programmatic support and smaller rapid response grants to enable women-led initiatives to respond swiftly to the crisis. Increase funding for capacity-building initiatives, with a focus on enhancing skills for women's participation in peace processes, mediation, recovery efforts, justice, donor engagement, transitional justice, and organizational management.
- **Boost funding for medical and psychosocial support for survivors** of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence. This should include free, gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, and geographically accessible reproductive and sexual health services, along with specialized mental health services, trauma recovery centers, and safe houses. Engage male health professionals and advocates in promoting these services, ensuring that they are perceived as essential for both women and men in the community.

- **Increase efforts to protect women and girls from military recruitment** and re-militarization, while supporting psychosocial rehabilitation and community reintegration programs for those affected.
- **Support initiatives that enhance women’s ability to recognize, document, and report war crimes**, especially those related to sexual and gender-based violence. Involve men in these initiatives as allies who help document and support the prosecution of sexual violence, encouraging a broader societal effort to combat impunity.
- **Provide security grants for women human rights defenders and journalists**, particularly those in asylum or displacement, and facilitate their evacuation when necessary.
- **Support legal aid for women human rights defenders, activists, and organizations** both in Sudan and the diaspora, helping them play a more effective role. This includes providing access to legal representation for women currently detained on charges of being “collaborators” with warring parties. Encourage male legal experts to contribute to these efforts, ensuring that they provide support to women’s rights defenders and contribute to strengthening of legal systems that protect women.
- **Support the inclusion of young women in the WPS space** in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2250. This is vital to ensure the participation of young women and youth-led organizations in peacebuilding processes. Involve young men alongside young women in peacebuilding initiatives, helping to reshape the narrative around masculinities and their role in supporting peace.
- **Provide targeted support for women living with disabilities**, including assistance to organizations like the Usratuna Sudanese Association for Persons with Disabilities. This support should involve collecting data on the specific vulnerabilities faced by women with disabilities and developing targeted responses for this marginalized group. Promote male involvement in advocating for the rights of women with disabilities, ensuring that both men and women see these issues as central to their shared responsibility in peace and recovery efforts.
- **Offer support to strengthen digital security, fight online violence and hate speech** to ensure that women can speak, organize, and lead safely and effectively online. Engage men and boys in digital literacy programs to understand the risks women face online and advocate for safe online spaces for all.

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