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GENDER ALERT NO. 2




NO EXCUSE: CALLING FOR AN END TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SUDAN


December 2024

TRIGGER WARNING


This publication contains information and descriptions related to violence against women and girls that may be distressing or triggering. Reader discretion advised.



Despite global advocacy, the lack of monitoring and accountability mechanisms allows violence to persist unchecked, perpetuating a culture of impunity.



Women and girls are abducted during raids, subjected to sexual violence, and forced into domestic servitude—conditions amounting to sexual slavery and enslavement.



By October 2024, over 11 million people had been displaced by the conflict between warring parties, which erupted in April 2023—a staggering humanitarian crisis.



Over **6.9 million²** women and girls, and increasingly men and boys, are at risk of GBV across Sudan, with a marked increase in conflict-related sexual violence reported across the country”



288%
Increase in GBV survivors seeking support between December 2023 and December 2024.



6 to 75 years
Age of individuals affected by reported cases of sexual violence in Sudan, highlighting the widespread nature of the crisis.

1 Research for this Gender Alert was carried out between 11 November to 08 December 2024. Methodology included a review of secondary source data, as well as 8 semi-structured interviews and 2 focus group discussions held with 18 individuals (17 female, 1 male), from 16 organizations and entities including UN, INGO, government and WLO actors.

2 Source: From the UNFPA Dec 2024 Report: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/unfpa-sudan-emergency-situation-report-no-18-november-2024>



Photo: OCHA/Ala Kheir

I. OVERVIEW

Widespread gender-based violence (GBV) including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) encompassing rape and gang rape, forced prostitution, trafficking, sexual violence in the context of abduction and disappearances, forced marriage, and sexual violence combined with brutal attacks and killings against women, girls, men, and boys has been a defining feature of the violent conflict in Sudan. The rampant conflict-related insecurity characterized by looting, destruction of homes and livelihoods, mass displacement, and acute food insecurity bordering on famine, has left women and girls in Sudan at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV), and harmful practices such as child and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

By October 2024, the conflict, which erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, had displaced more than 11 million people with no signs of abating.² Shocking trends of CRSV and other forms of GBV carried out against women and girls are part of a broader historical pattern of deeply rooted gender inequalities perpetuated through discriminatory social, political, economic, legal, cultural and religious practices in the country.³ This has led to the normalization of violence against women and girls, particularly during conflict, as part of a broader strategy of inflicting fear and humiliation on them and their communities.⁴

The UN estimates that 12 million women, girls, men and boys are at risk of GBV in Sudan with women and girl internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, migrants, and ethnic minority groups particularly vulnerable.⁵ Data on the different forms of GBV remains limited due to insecurity and lack of monitoring systems. Nevertheless, cases of GBV survivors seeking services rose by 288 per cent between December 2023 and December 2024.^{6,7}

GBV has also manifested in disturbing trends of threats, rape, and/or killings of female health workers, human rights defenders (HRDs), humanitarian workers, journalists, and staff of women-led organizations (WLOs), including those supporting GBV survivors, as part of a broader strategy of terror, reprisals intimidation, and control.⁸ Despite these challenges, WLOs and female volunteers remain at the forefront of gender-responsive/transformational humanitarian efforts to meet the needs of women and girls. Their adaptability, innovation, and resilience enable them to reach survivors in hard-to-access areas ensuring critical support even in the face of insecurity and violence.

2 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh Session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual Report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/sessions57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; IOM. October 2024. DTM Sudan Mobility Update (10). Retrieved from: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-mobility-update-10>

3 Geneva International Center for Justice (GICJ). November 2022. Sudan's Systemic Patterns of Violence Against Women, Bethany Morley, 29 November 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.gicj.org/topics/countries/208-sudan/3132-sudan%E2%80%99s-systematic-cycles-of-violence-against-women>.

4 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the War on Women and Girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. <https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/the-gendering-of-sudans-brutal-war/>;

5 UN Sudan. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. Draft to be published in December 2024; IOM. October 2024. DTM Sudan Mobility Update (10). Retrieved from: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-mobility-update-10>

6 UN Sudan. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. Draft to be published in December 2024.

7 UN Women. 2024. Sudan Gender Alert No. 1. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/gender-alert-women-and-girls-of-sudan-fortitude-amid-the-flame-of-war>

8 International Federation of Human Rights. 2024. Sudan: Rising Attacks Against WHRDs and Women's Rights Groups. Retrieved from: <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/sudan/sudan-rising-attacks-against-whrds-and-women-s-rights-groups>. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-rising-attacks-against-whrds-and-womens-rights-groups>

II. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PATTERNS

Prior to the current conflict, prominent forms of GBV against women and girls in Sudan included domestic violence (including verbal abuse, pressure to comply with existing gender norms and roles, or other acts of psychological violence), sexual violence (including rape), forced marriage, particularly child marriage and abduction for marriage, and FGM. Women and girls experienced violence in the home, community, and by armed groups in times of conflict.⁹ Sexual violence has previously been used as a weapon of war in Sudan by armed groups to terrorize and control communities in conflict, starting in 2002 and 2006, and during pro-democracy movements in 2019.¹⁰

a. Gender-Based Violence Patterns

The current conflict is characterized by a sharp increase in GBV among individuals fleeing from conflict zones.¹¹ This is partly evidenced by the 288 per cent increase in GBV survivors seeking assistance between December 2023 and December 2024.¹² Furthermore, GBV incidents, particularly CRSV, have been reported across different states where there has been intense fighting.

CRSV as a form of GBV has been perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, and is sustained in a context of increased inter-communal violence and the collapse of law and order.¹³ It is a severe violation of international human rights and humanitarian law and may also con-

stitute a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread and systemic attack against a civilian population.¹⁴ While verified documented cases of CRSV number in the hundreds, underreporting is endemic.¹⁵ Men and boys have also been victims of CRSV although in much fewer numbers than women and girls, which corresponds to the disproportionate number of women and girls affected by GBV overall.

Increased as well as newly emerging CRSV patterns as compared to previous periods include:

- Widespread sexual violence during the invasion of urban centers and cities.¹⁶
- Large-scale sexual violence including rape perpetrated inside people's homes during raids in the wider context of invasions, looting, killing, torching, searches, and abductions.¹⁷
- Widespread incidents of gang rape and rape with multiple offenders.¹⁸ This often involves one victim

9 UNFPA. 2021. Voices from Sudan 2020: A Qualitative Assessment of Gender-Based Violence in Sudan. Retrieved from: <https://sudan.unfpa.org/en/publications/voices-sudan-2020-qualitative-assessment-gender-based-violence-sudan>

10 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh Session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual Report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the War on Women and Girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123_ACAPS_Sudan_Analysis_Hub_thematic_report_impact_of_the_war_on_women_and_girls.pdf.

11 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024, p.5; UNFPA 2024. Sexual violence and conflict in Sudan: A war on the bodies of women and girls. Retrieved from: <https://www.unfpa.org/news/sexual-violence-and-conflict-sudan-war-bodies-women-and-girls>

12 UN Sudan. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response plan. Draft to be published in December 2024.

13 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; UNHCR. 2024. Protection brief Gender-based violence, Sudan Situation, June 2024. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/11029>

14 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

15 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; UNFPA 2023. Press release - Sudan: Top UN officials sound alarm at spike of violence against women and girls.

16 Human Rights Watch. 2024. Khartoum is not safe for women. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2024/07/sudan-0724web_o.pdf

17 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

18 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; Insecurity Insight. 2023. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sudan 15 April to 30 September 2023. Retrieved from: <https://insecurity-insight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>

- and one or many perpetrators, or several girls and women assaulted in the same house raid.¹⁹
- Sexual violence carried out in the presence of family members and loved ones. Sometimes husbands, mothers, siblings or children are shot, raped or killed when trying to intervene to stop the rape of their loved ones.²⁰
 - Sexual violence attacks accompanied by severe and brutal physical assaults with perpetrators using guns, knives and other weapons to intimidate, beat, torture, and sometimes kill their victims.²¹
 - Rape and other forms of sexual violence while women and girls attempt to flee from conflict-affected areas. This includes being raped on roads and at checkpoints, after being forced at gunpoint off buses heading to safety, or while seeking shelter in abandoned houses.²² Displaced women and girls located in shelters, IDP camps, or awaiting visas at border points are also at heightened risk of sexual violence.²³
 - Abduction and forced disappearances in which women and girls are abducted from their homes during raids and subjected to ongoing sexual violence in captivity (a form of sexual slavery) and sometimes forced to provide domestic services such as cooking and cleaning for combatants in conditions “tantamount to enslavement.”²⁴
 - Opportunistic rape and other acts of sexual violence in the broader context of multiple human rights violations, lawlessness, widespread impunity, massive displacements, highly militarized urban environments, acute food insecurity and lack of basic services.²⁵ For example, there have been cases of women and girls being raped on their way to the market or to collect water for their family in the capital, Khartoum.²⁶
 - Young women and girls, including IDPs, are reportedly being trafficked for sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery, with some allegations of them being sold at slave markets.²⁷
 - Sudanese women and girls who flee to neighboring countries continue to face GBV risks while seeking refuge and protection across borders. This includes: rape in the context of insecurity and the presence of armed elements in refugee settings; increases in harmful coping strategies, including child and forced marriage, and selling or exchanging sex for assets to meet basic needs; increases in IPV.²⁸

19 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/sessions57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

20 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

21 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/sessions57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

22 SUWRA. 2024. SUWRA Joint Statement, 7 Nov 2024 Retrieved from: <https://suwra.org/blog/2024/11/07/sudan-end-war-crimes-against-civilians/>

23 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/sessions57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

24 Insecurity Insight. 2023. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sudan 15 April to 30 September 2023. Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>

25 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

24 Insecurity Insight. 2023. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sudan 15 April to 30 September 2023. Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>; UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/sessions57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

25 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/sessions57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

26 Female UN Staff interview, Key Informant Interview, conducted on 28/11/2024

27 OHCHR, Press Release: Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts, March 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/sudan-trafficking-sexual-exploitation-and-recruitment-children-rise-warn-un>

28 UNHCR. 2024. Protection Brief, Gender-based Violence, Sudan Situation, July 2024. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109800>

Despite global attention and high-level advocacy on this issue, the absence of a monitoring, reporting, and accountability mechanism to hold perpetrators to account has meant that violence continues unabated amidst a culture of impunity. This ongoing failure undermines international commitments, such as those outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 1820, which explicitly calls for the prevention of CRSV, the protection of civilians, and the delivery of justice for survivors as a critical aspect of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The lack of accountability not only perpetuates cycles of violence but also violates international humanitarian and human rights law.

Beyond CRSV the impacts of the conflict, including acute food insecurity bordering on famine, hyperinflation and economic crisis, loss of livelihoods, and general lawlessness and insecurity, have contributed to an increase in other forms of GBV, including:

- Domestic violence and IPV, which is known to be exacerbated during armed conflict and is linked to rising stress and tension within households as a result of pressures from the conflict such as high inflation, economic hardship, overcrowding, displacement, and loss of livelihoods, among others.^{29,30}
- Sexual exploitation, abuse, and coercion of women and girls by aid workers.³¹ In the face of acute food insecurity and looming famine, displaced women and girls, many of whom are left as the sole providers of their families as male family members stay behind to protect property or fight, may resort to negative coping mechanisms and exchange sex for food in desperate attempts to feed their starving families.³² This may take place in the context of IDP displacement centers between IDPs and camp staff or manage-

ment, as well as in cities and towns where parties to the conflicts are involved in providing humanitarian assistance.³³ The Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview (SEARO) Index, updated in May 2024, ranks Sudan as the sixth highest risk out of 34 countries assessed.³⁴ This indicates that aid recipients in Sudan face a heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers.³⁵ Reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is low and, in some cases, perpetrators, and even victims, do not recognize SEA as abuse as it has become normalized.³⁶

“The level of famine that is taking place right now is putting the equation of food for sex as one of the biggest issues in Sudan... Women’s bodies are being used as an economic tool for survival – the dignity of Sudanese women is one of the casualties of this war and needs to be saved”. Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, 25/11/2024.

- Incidents of forced marriage to heads of IDP camps or camp coordinators have also been reported in informal IDP sites where the UN has limited access, which limits its ability to mitigate and address GBV and SEA within communities.³⁷
- Rising numbers of forced and child marriage among young women and girls. This includes families being forced to ‘surrender’ their daughters under threat in exchange for protection or financial

29 CARE 2023. Rapid Gender Analysis. Retrieved from: <https://carevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/RGA-Sudan-October-2023.pdf> ; UNFPA. 2023. Sudan emergency situation report No. 7. 29 October 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/unfpa-sudan-emergency-situation-report-7-29-october-2023>. Also see: ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123.

30 Spangaro, J., Toole-Anstey, C., MacPhail, C.L. et al. The impact of interventions to reduce risk and incidence of intimate partner violence and sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict states and other humanitarian crises in low and middle income countries: a systematic review. *Confl Health* 15, 86 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-021-00417-x> Retrieved from: <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-021-00417-x>

31 Sudan Operations Coordination Centre. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Response Famine Prevention Plan Cross Cutting Issues Integrated Risk Analysis and Key Cluster Recommendations Guidance. Retrieved from: <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/sudan-humanitarian-response-famine-prevention-plan-cross-cutting-issues-integrated-risk>

32 Sudan Operations Coordination Centre. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Response Famine Prevention Plan. Cross Cutting Issues Integrated Risk Analysis and Key Cluster Recommendations Guidance. Retrieved from: <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/sudan-humanitarian-response-famine-prevention-plan-cross-cutting-issues-integrated-risk>

33 Sudan Operations Coordination Centre. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Response Famine Prevention Plan. Cross Cutting Issues Integrated Risk Analysis and Key Cluster Recommendations Guidance. Retrieved from: <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/sudan-humanitarian-response-famine-prevention-plan-cross-cutting-issues-integrated-risk>

34 The Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview, 2024. Retrieved from <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-sea-risk-overview-index>.

35 Sudan Operations Coordination Centre. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Response Famine Prevention Plan. Cross Cutting Issues Integrated Risk Analysis and Key Cluster Recommendations Guidance. Retrieved from: <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/sudan-humanitarian-response-famine-prevention-plan-cross-cutting-issues-integrated-risk>

36 Increases in SEA are due to a diverse set of factors including scarce resources and people putting themselves on the line as a result, underfunding of the response including protection services, power imbalances in the context of the crisis, and a systemic culture of impunity within organizations. Data is limited on SEA cases in Sudan, and while women and girls are disproportionately affected, there are a marginal number of men and boys. Key Informant Interview, conducted on 29/11/2024.

37 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

compensation (e.g., dowry), and also families who use child marriage as a negative coping strategy based on the (false) assumption that married girls won't be raped or abducted, or to help alleviate economic strain in the hope that the husband will carry the economic burden of his new wife.³⁸ Increased risks of GBV and harmful practices such as child marriage are also linked to school closures. According to UNICEF, 2.5 million (74 per cent) of school-aged girls cannot return to the classroom as a result of the conflict. This not only increases their immediate risk of GBV, but also rolls back gender equality gains while limiting their future economic opportunities.³⁹

- Increased cases of FGM,⁴⁰ which accompanies child marriage and is believed by some families to protect girls from sexual violence, preserve a girls' virginity, or prevent them from becoming pregnant if they are raped. These are dangerous misperceptions, as young girls subjected to FGM and then rape, as well as childhood pregnancies from rape can face severe physical trauma and psychosocial complications.⁴¹ Before the war, the prevalence of FGM in Sudan was 87 per cent among girls and women aged 15 to 49 years and 32 per cent among girls (under the age of 14 years). These rates are among the highest in Africa. Since the onset of the war, these rates are reported to have increased further, exacerbated by the negative impact of the conflict on protection mechanisms, community structures, and access to education and awareness programs.

38 The rise in early marriage has been observed in Khartoum where such practices were limited before the conflict. Focus Group Discussion, conducted on 27/11/2024; Other potential drivers of child marriage include decreased access to education, and increased school drop out, which increases girls' risk. ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the War on Women and Girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

39 UNICEF. 2024. Humanitarian Situation Report No. 18. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/unicef-sudan-humanitarian-situation-report-no-18-april-2024?>

40 UNICEF (n.d.). Female Genital Mutilation in Sudan Factsheet. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/sudan/media/9386/file/FGM%20Factsheet-FINAL.pdf>; These rates are amongst the highest in the Africa. Source: WHO Regional FGM fact sheet. Retrieved from: https://files.who.int/afahob-ckpcontainer/production/files/iAHO_FGM_Regional_Fact_sheet.pdf

41 According to SSHAP: "One humanitarian practitioner interviewed for the SSHAP Report explained there is a common mindset that: 'Girls might be subjected to rape and assaults here but if she is subjected to FGM [infibulation], it will be hard to break her hymen so she will still be a virgin.'" Source: Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform (SSHAP), Female Genital Mutilation among Sudanese Displaced Populations in Egypt. Meral Marouf, Jennifer Palmer 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.socialscienceinaction.org/resources/key-considerations-female-genital-mutilation-among-sudanese-displaced-populations-in-egypt/>

b. Targeted Groups

Reported cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence encompass individuals ranging in age from 6 to 75 years.⁴² While women and girls make up the vast majority of victims and survivors, men and boys have also been subjected to sexual violence, including, but not exclusively, in the context of detention. Such cases are most probably underreported given the social stigma and limited pathways for male survivors to safely and confidentially report.⁴³

Deliberate targeting of ethnic minority groups for rape and other forms of sexual violence has been prevalent.⁴⁴

^{45,46} Survivors report widespread use of racial slurs during

42 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh Session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

43 According to the UN Fact Finding Mission: "Though there are probably fewer male victims, the very low number of cases documented may also be due to cultural norms and the lack of dedicated referral pathways. This makes it difficult for male survivors to come forward and seek support after a sexual assault. The Fact-Finding Mission collected victim testimonies on the use of sexual violence including forced nudity, beatings on genitals, and rape threats against men and boys in detention during or prior to their interrogation. The Fact-Finding Mission also received credible information, including witness testimonies, about rape and gang-rape of men and boys, including but not limited to the context of detention, which call for further investigations." Source: UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024, pp 40-41. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; Institute for Security Studies. 2024. More focus needed on sexual violence against males in Sudan. Retrieved from: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/more-focus-needed-on-sexual-violence-against-males-in-sudan>.

44 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

45 UHCHR. 2024. Findings of the monitoring mission by OHCHR Sudan to the Chadian border with Sudan from 18 February - 3 March 2024, in the context of the hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in West Darfur. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/findings-monitoring-mission-ohchr-sudan-chadian-border-sudan-18-february-3-march-2024-context-hostilities-between-sudanese-armed-forces-saf-and-rapid-support-forces-rsf-west-darfur>

46 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

There have been reports of deliberate targeting of women human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and humanitarian and foreign aid workers for intimidation, violence, rape, abduction, and sometimes killing to silence documentation and reporting of GBV incidents and the scale of atrocities

attacks and, in some cases, perpetrators demanded to know the tribal affiliation before targeting victims.⁴⁷

Targeted sexual attacks have also been carried out on internally displaced and refugee women while they were fleeing.⁴⁸

There have been reports of deliberate targeting of women human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and humanitarian and foreign aid workers for intimidation, violence, rape, abduction, and sometimes killing to silence documentation and reporting of GBV incidents and the scale of atrocities.⁴⁹

Similar deliberate attacks against female health workers and staff of WLOs, including those providing services to GBV survivors, have been observed. This has restricted their ability to offer health and specialized GBV services

to survivors.⁵⁰ The trend also instills fear and serves to intimidate and deter survivors from seeking the health care services they desperately need.⁵¹

People affiliated with opposing political parties have also been subject to rape and other forms of sexual violence.⁵²

Armed attacks on female humanitarians and women HRDs in Sudan are rooted in power imbalances and cultural norms that seek to marginalize women in public and leadership roles. These attacks are deliberate acts that mean to undermine women's agency, restrict their participation in peacebuilding, and discourage their advocacy for justice and human rights. By targeting women in these roles, perpetrators exploit their gender as a means of reinforcing systemic oppression and perpetuating fear, sending a broader message to deter other women from challenging entrenched patriarchal structures.⁵³

Women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination on the basis of their sex and disability which puts them at heightened risk of GBV and SEA.⁵⁴ The extent to which other groups which face a higher risk of sexual violence in non-conflict settings are facing heightened risks during the current conflict, requires further investigation. These include LGBTQIA+, people living with HIV (PLWHIV), and people engaged in sex work.

47 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. p. 38. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; According to Insecurity Insight: "In some incidents, survivors claimed that during the attack, their attackers racially abused them and some survivors were told to leave the city because it "belonged to the Arabs". Another survivor reported that her attackers said that they "should rape the Nuba women until they gave birth to our babies". Source: Insecurity Insight. 2023. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sudan 15 April to 30 September 2023. p.8. Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>

48 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

49 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. p.46. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>; See also, Insecurity Insight. 2023. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sudan 15 April to 30 September 2023. p.4 Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>

50 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123; Human Rights Watch. 2024. Khartoum is not safe for women. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2024/07/sudan0724web_0.pdf

51 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

52 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

53 Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. 2024. Sudan: Rising attacks against WHRDs and women's rights groups. Retrieved from: [<https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/sudan/sudan-rising-attacks-against-whrds-and-women-s-rights-groups>].

54 Sudan Operations Coordination Centre. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Response Famine Prevention Plan. Cross Cutting Issues Integrated Risk Analysis and Key Cluster Recommendations Guidance. Retrieved from: <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/sudan-humanitarian-response-famine-prevention-plan-cross-cutting-issues-integrated-risk>

III. IMPACT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON WOMEN AND GIRLS



Photo: UNICEF/UN0834908/Le Du

Widespread GBV in the Sudanese conflict has had an immediate devastating impact on women and girls, their families, and their communities. It has taken a heavy toll on the physical and mental health of survivors, their bodily autonomy, social and economic wellbeing, and sense of security and dignity. These will have long-lasting consequences and costs for the country.

Death. Victims of sexual violence have been killed after resisting rape and those who tried to defend them have also been attacked or killed.^{55, 56} Some women and girls have died following injuries suffered during rape⁵⁷ and there may be other GBV-related deaths that are not reported due to insecurity and lack of monitoring systems.⁵⁸

Health Impact. The health consequences suffered by survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence can be life-altering. These include: direct physical injuries

from the assault;⁵⁹ sexually-transmitted illnesses (STIs) including HIV and Hepatitis B infections; sexual and reproductive health (SRH) complications including miscarriages or inability to have children, and; injuries such as gunshot wounds, stab wounds, broken bones, chronic abdominal and back pains, and headaches due to blows to the head related to brutal attacks during the rape. Women and girls who have undergone FGM can have aggravated physical damage sustained by the rape.⁶⁰

Mental Health Impact. The mental health consequences of sexual violence that survivors experience include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia, disassociation, depression, and flashbacks. Frontline workers and women in civil society report a concerning trend of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts by young women due to the stigma and shame associated with rape and/or the resulting pregnancy.⁶¹ Family members who witnessed the sexual assault of a mother, daughter, or sister also

55 Human Rights Watch. 2024. Khartoum is not safe for women. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2024/07/sudan0724web_0.pdf

56 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

57 UNICEF. 2024. Sexual violence and famine stalk Sudan's displaced. Retrieved from: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153116>

58 BBC. 2024. SIHA quoted in a BBC news article. Retrieved from: Sudan civil war: Women raped by RSF fighters in Gezira state die by suicide, activists say. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8xpqvz0e88o>

59 These injuries can include, among others, vaginal tears and rectal bleeding, continuous bleeding, and fistula. Source: WHO. 2003. World Health Organization. Guidelines for medico-legal care of victims of sexual violence. Retrieved from: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/42788/924154628X.pdf>

60 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

61 Ibid

show signs of post-traumatic stress such as nightmares and behavior changes.⁶² Older women, adolescent girls, and women and girls with disabilities who survive GBV are at higher risk of severe physical and mental health consequences.⁶³

Bodily Autonomy. Survivors who become pregnant as a result of rape may have trouble accessing a safe abortion legally, leaving them with no choice other than to go through with the pregnancy or attempt a risky unsafe abortion, thus putting their health in even further danger. Children born of rape face distinct protection risks including infanticide, abandonment and discrimination, and intergenerational trauma.⁶⁴ There have been reports of a surge in the numbers of unwanted pregnancies and unmarried pregnant women turning up at health centers, as well as increased numbers of infants left at orphanages.⁶⁵

Social Stigma. Sudan is a conservative society where survivors, rather than perpetrators, carry the blame for and shame of sexual violence. The immense social consequences suffered by survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence include stigma, shame, and social ostracization. Some survivors report being abandoned by their husbands or being rejected by their fathers or brothers. Many women and girls will not tell their families what happened while others carry the heavy burden of bringing shame on their families, and may self-isolate, or fear that they are unsuitable for marriage and thus incomplete as a woman.^{66,67} This exacerbates their negative mental health status and overall wellbeing. Sudanese women and girls who become pregnant due

to rape face more ostracization and social stigma than survivors who did not get pregnant.^{68,69}

Intergenerational trauma for children born of rape and their mothers is often overlooked and is a critical long-term impact of rape.

“Survivors are victimized both ways – they are blamed for GBV and are shouldering the consequences....Women pay twice for everything that is happening – whether they are exposed directly or indirectly to all the violations, they get blamed...it’s a rape culture, a blame-the-victim culture. People do it without meaning to – we need to change this kind of culture and enhance the protection of women and girls within the community to ensure that women feel safe in their own families and communities,”
Female Government Representative, Key Informant Interview, 26/11/2024

Economic Impact. Survivors who have been abandoned by their families lose their source of collective income and must fend for themselves. Furthermore, widespread displacement and the breakdown of family, community and state protection structures undermines their sense of security and decreases the resources that survivors would normally turn to for support.⁷⁰ Restricted movement as a result of heightened insecurity and risk of sexual assault in public or while going about economic activities further limits women’s access to livelihoods.

“When the conflict came, women lost everything: social protection, economic independence, informal labor. [Women in conservative communities] relied on their family members for everything and have zero experience making decisions on their own. They lost all resilience that helped them cope,” Female UN Staff, Key Informant Interview, 13/11/2024

62 One survivor described to the Fact-Finding Mission how her children had grown anxious and kept asking: “Why did this happen to you, mom? Don’t leave us, they are going to beat you, stay with us”. Source: UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. 6 September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

63 UN Sudan. 2024. Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response plan. Draft to be published in December 2024.

64 GBVAOR. 2021. Minimum Standards PowerPoint Presentation (Intro and one for each MS). Retrieved from: <https://gbvaor.net/node/940>

65 Ibid. The increase in numbers of infants being left at orphanages may include children born of rape as well as children whose families cannot afford to care for them in the context of the current crisis. Male, UN Staff interview held on 08/12/2024.

66 Peter Moszynski, 2004. Rape victims in Sudan face life of stigma, says report. BMJ 2004 Jul 31;329(7460):251. doi: 10.1136/bmj.329.7460.251-b

67 GBVOAR. 2023. Sudan - The Current Context and Concerning GBV. Trends Analysis and Situational Update as of 29 November 2023. Retrieved from: https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2023-12/2_Sudan%20GBV%20Trends%20Analysis_GBv%20SS_Nov%2029%202023%20final.pdf

68 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the War on Women and Girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

69 CARE 2023. Rapid Gender Analysis. Retrieved from: <https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/RGA-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>

70 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the War on Women and Girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

IV. GBV PROGRAMMES AND RESPONSE GAPS

a. GBV programmes

Despite significant challenges posed by the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis, the GBV response in Sudan includes various programs led by the UN, INGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), WLOs and volunteers.

Immediate crisis response and protection services include safe spaces where GBV survivors can access psychosocial support, medical care, legal assistance, case-management and referral pathways. Services to support critical healthcare services for GBV survivors include emergency contraception and post-rape treatment kits, although access remains limited in conflict-affected areas. GBV programs in support of Sudanese women and girls who have fled to neighboring countries include prevention and survival services in refugee camps where GBV risks remain high. As of February 2024, there were 68 women and girls' safe spaces in Sudan.⁷¹

Community-based protection initiatives include those led by WLOs, who play a vital role in identifying and supporting GBV survivors within displaced communities. WLOs often operate in inaccessible areas leveraging local networks to deliver services where international agencies face barriers. Emergency Response Rooms (ERR) are one of the many Sudanese community-led initiatives that have played a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid in conflict-affected areas. These ERRs and the community-based organizations (CBOs) running them have also played a critical role in providing referrals or facilitating access or evacuations of sexual violence survivors to health care and psychosocial support across the country.⁷²

GBV prevention efforts are also a key part of programming, and include actions for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), transforming social norms, and investing in the socio-economic empowerment of women, including through livelihood training.

Advocacy actions, include calls to end CRSV and impunity for perpetrators, to combat stigma surrounding GBV, and to protect and promote survivors' rights. Corresponding efforts to strengthen relevant legal



UNICEF/UN0836601/Zakaria

and policy frameworks are also underway. Advocacy efforts have seen some progress with the Sudanese government newly acknowledging CRSV and recently proposing to establish safe shelters for survivors under its management. Current efforts are underway to develop an agreement on safe shelters and principled actions informed by a survivor-centered approach.⁷³

GBV coordination is led by the GBV Area of Responsibility (AOR) which has a national working group and 16 sub-national working groups that coordinate referral pathways, including by engaging with local WLOs who provide GBV prevention and response. Various partners are also working to enhance the resources, space, and operation of WLOs that focus on GBV prevention and response. Complementary coordination groups include the Child Protection Sub-Cluster, Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA) and PSEA working groups, which work to amplify key GBV messaging.

71 Sudan - Disaster before us: GBV Situational Update as of 1 April 2024 - Sudan | ReliefWeb. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-disaster-us-gbv-situational-update-1-april-2024>

72 Ayin Network. 2024. The new aid enigma: Emergency Response Rooms, 1 November 2024. Retrieved from: <https://3ayin.com/en/err/>

73 According to the Sudan Brief: "Sexual violence in general and rape in particular has traditionally been met with silence and denial by official authorities and with threats towards women's groups and human rights organizations working in the field. However, after the outbreak of the April 15 [2023] war, official authorities and institutions are acknowledging sexual violence. The VAW unit is now documenting cases of sexual violence and SAF has openly acknowledged that rape is part of current warfare....Something has undeniably changed when it comes to the narrative about sexual violence in Sudan. The official discourse is no longer one of denial. The recognition of rape as a tool of war might be a blessing in disguise. At the very least, it opens up the space to put sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) on the agenda in any upcoming peace and ceasefire processes," Source: Sexual violence in Sudan: From denial to recognition, Samia Nihar, Sudan Brief, No. 1, February 2024 (pp,3-4); Also, Briefing note for RC/HC (internal); Key informant interview conducted 13/11/2024.

b. GBV Response Gaps

“Women and girls do not know what kind of acts are considered SEA and abuse – people don’t report most things. You only find out by chance if a girl gets pregnant or if it happens to be a minor and it gets reported. People keep silent, they’d rather not talk about it, they’re afraid it might cause problems inside [IDP] gathering points,” Female Government Representative, Key Informant Interview, 26/11/2024.

GBV Response Services

Despite concerted efforts over the past nineteen months of conflict, the reach of GBV response services in Sudan remains limited in light of the vast needs. According to the UN, between January and October 2024, GBV partner organizations reached some 164,000 women and girls (75 per cent of survivors of reached), men, and boys (25 per cent of survivors reached) across Sudan with support. This represents less than 10 per cent of the targeted number as insecurity, no access, and underfunding severely constrained aid agencies and response actors including WLOs.⁷⁴

“The conflict has increasingly restrained access to emergency care, and humanitarian reporting.”⁷⁵

Specialized GBV services such as clinical management of rape (CMR), Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for GBV survivors and community members, material support such as dignity kits⁷⁶, comprehensive GBV case management, referrals to other services, access to legal assistance, and safe spaces for women and girls are limited and do not cover needs”.

The following gaps remain a priority for GBV survivor support services:

Limited Availability of Health Services: Access to health services, including clinical management of rape (CMR) and other essential medical care, is severely restricted

due to the destruction of health facilities and ongoing conflict.⁷⁷

Some 70 to 80 per cent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas of Sudan are no longer functioning and those that are still functioning struggle with shortages of medical supplies and health care workers, and are overwhelmed by people seeking care. There is also a shortage of trained professionals equipped to provide survivor-centered care, including CMR and referrals, leaving survivors unable to receive context-specific medical attention.⁷⁸ Such extensive damage to the health infrastructure means survivors are deterred from seeking medical care and those who pursue medical care have delayed or limited access to health services.

For survivors who can reach medical facilities, they may have limited or no access to emergency post-rape care, or may not disclose the rape in time.⁷⁹ Access to specialized health care to address fistula is limited in Sudan and in neighboring refugee-receiving countries leaving women to suffer from their injuries with no access to treatment.⁸⁰

Survivors face challenges accessing safe termination of pregnancy resulting from rape. While abortion in the case of rape is legal in Sudan, administrative impediments, which were challenging prior to the conflict and are now exacerbated by insecurity, displacement, and the breakdown of rule of law institutions, have made it difficult in practice for survivors who have become pregnant to legally access safe abortion.⁸¹ Pregnant survivors also have limited access to sexual and reproductive health services.⁸²

There are critical shortages of medical supplies and trained healthcare providers to address the needs of GBV survivors.⁸³ Considering supply shortages, some

74 UN Statement by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Clementine Nkweta-Salami, on the 16 Days of Activism Campaign, 25 November 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan-statement-un-resident-and-humanitarian-coordinator-sudan-clementine-nkweta-salami-16-days-activism-campaign>

75 WHO quoted in ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

76 These usually contain menstrual pads, bath soap, multiple pairs of underwear, detergent powder, sanitary napkins, a flashlight, toothpaste, a toothbrush and a comb.

77 UNHCR. 2023. ‘Protection Brief, December 2023’. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

78 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the War on Women and Girls, Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

79 Insecurity Insight. 2023. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sudan 15 April to 30 September 2023. Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>

80 Key informant interview, conducted 13/11/2024.

81 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

82 Focus group discussion, 27/11/2024

83 UNHCR. 2024. ‘Gender-Based Violence Update, June 2024’. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109767> (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

hospitals have developed adapted emergency post-rape protocols.⁸⁴

Insufficient Safe Spaces: There is a shortage of safe spaces for women and girls. These spaces are crucial for providing psychosocial support and empowerment activities but are in limited supply, especially in conflict-affected areas.⁸⁵

The volatile security situation and ongoing hostilities make it challenging to maintain and protect these safe spaces.⁸⁶

Limited MHPSS services: Psychosocial support services (PSS) are insufficient to meet the high demand. Many survivors do not receive the necessary mental health support due to limited resources and trained personnel.⁸⁷ Current Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) cannot meet the vast scale of mental health and psychosocial support needs of GBV survivors and their families.⁸⁸

Stigma and fear of retaliation prevent many survivors from reporting GBV⁸⁹

Limited Legal Access: There is a significant gap in the availability of legal assistance for GBV survivors. Many survivors face barriers in accessing legal aid due to ongoing conflict, lack of awareness, and fear of stigma and retaliation.⁹⁰ Survivors who want to but cannot afford to take legal action have few options for free legal aid as most legal services in the referral pathways are reserved for documentation rather than legal action.⁹¹

Legal services are severely underfunded, which limits the capacity to provide comprehensive support to survivors.⁹²

Livelihoods Support: Many women and girls lack access to livelihood opportunities, which increases their vulnerability to GBV. The conflict has disrupted economic activities and there is a need for more targeted livelihood support programs.⁹³

Harmful Coping Mechanisms: Due to economic hardship, some women and girls resort to transactional sex, further exposing themselves to GBV and risk of STIs, including HIV. In addition, they can also fall prey to trafficking/sexual exploitation.⁹⁴

Limited humanitarian access and GBV services: Limited humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas makes it difficult for some agencies/organizations to reach survivors with GBV risk mitigation and response services. Furthermore, service providers must navigate the culture of silence surrounding GBV incidents to better support survivors.⁹⁵

Front line workers including humanitarian workers attempting to provide services to survivors face numerous challenges including insecurity, intimidation and threats by parties to the conflict, restrictions on humanitarian access, lack of specialized training, weak or absent communication networks (e.g., poor or altogether non-functioning internet) and insufficient supplies (e.g., medical) and resources (e.g., funds, human resources).⁹⁶

Despite the challenging operational context, additional factors contribute to the limited reach of GBV response services. According to the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) this includes: poor funding for the sector (less than 20 per cent of GBV response services needed was in place by October 2023 and the situation has not improved significantly in 2024);⁹⁷ capacity gaps due to the displacement or departure of trained staff, high turnover of existing staff, and the need for GBV services in new areas of the country where there are limited service providers specialized in GBV response; limited integration of GBV mitigation efforts in different sectors, and; emerging trends of GBV that require adapted/new responses (e.g., sexual violence against men and boys).⁹⁸

84 UN Human Rights Council. 2024. Report on the Independent International Fact Finding Mission for the Sudan HRC 2024. Report A/HRC/57/23. Report to the Human Rights Council, Fifty-Seventh session, 9 September - 9 October 2024, Annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 UNHCR. 2024. 'Gender-Based Violence Update, June 2024'. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109767> (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

88 Focus group discussion, 27/11/2024

89 UNHCR. 2024. 'Gender-Based Violence Update, June 2024'. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109767> (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

90 UNHCR. 2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

91 ACAPS Analysis Hub. 2024. Sudan: Impact of the war on women and girls. Thematic Report 23 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240123

92 UNHCR. 2024. 'Gender-Based Violence Update, June 2024'. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109767> (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

93 UNHCR. 2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

94 UNHCR. 2024. 'Gender-Based Violence Update, June 2024'. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109767> (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

95 Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interviews, 14/11/2024, and 25/11/2024.

96 Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interviews, 14/11/2024, and 25/11/2024.

97 UNOCHA. 2023. Cluster Status: Gender-based Violence (GBV) Sub-cluster Response (April - 15 October 2023) | OCHA. Retrieved from: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/cluster-status-gender-based-violence-gbv-sub-cluster-response-april-15-october-2023>.

98 United Nations. 2024. Capacity gaps due to the displacement or departure of trained staff, high turnover of existing staff, and the need for GBV services in new areas. Retrieved from: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/236/99/pdf/n2423699.pdf>

Prevention

Programmes to prevent SEA and harmful practices including child and forced marriage and FGM are limited considering the high need, as are those which are focused on recovery and economic empowerment.⁹⁹ A number of gaps in Sudan's GBV prevention space need to be addressed:

Community Engagement and Awareness: According to the research the most urgent gap was addressing PSEA, followed by forced and early marriage, FGM and IPV.^{100,101}

Funding and Resources: GBV prevention programs are among the least funded initiatives. This limits the implementation of comprehensive prevention strategies¹⁰² resulting in a general shortage of resources such as trained personnel and materials to effectively carry out prevention activities.¹⁰³ Furthermore, ensuring the sustainability of prevention programs is a challenge due to the ongoing conflict and instability in the region.¹⁰⁴

Access to Services: Many areas, especially conflict-affected regions, are difficult to reach to implement prevention programs and gather data to inform planning for GBV services. There are very limited accessible services for GBV survivors, which also impacts prevention efforts as communities may not see the benefits of reporting and addressing GBV.¹⁰⁵

Capacity Development: More training and capacity-development initiatives on survivor-centered approaches and working with survivors for local stakeholders are needed. For local stakeholders including community leaders, healthcare providers, and law enforcement to effectively prevent and respond to GBV.¹⁰⁶

Addressing these gaps will require a multifaceted approach comprising increased funding, enhanced community engagement, improved coordination, and comprehensive data collection, among others, to ensure that GBV prevention programs are effective and sustainable.

Need for stronger coordination and robust coordination and data collection:

There is need for stronger coordination among humanitarian actors to ensure a comprehensive and effective GBV response.¹⁰⁷ Greater coordination and coherence across the sector is likely to facilitate the urgent scale up of much-needed GBV services.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, the Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) Working Group is currently non-functional after the withdrawal of United Nations - African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). When functioning, this working group can contribute towards improving the monitoring, analysis and reporting of CRSV trends informing greater accountability, better-informed plans and evidence-based advocacy efforts. In addition, the absence of a functioning Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) in many IDP contexts limits GBV trend analysis.

Coordination among various stakeholders involved in GBV prevention, including government agencies, NGOs, and community groups needs to be improved.¹⁰⁹ While acknowledging the understandable challenges with data collection in conflict and crisis contexts, it is nonetheless worth noting that comprehensive data on GBV incidents and prevention efforts is lacking making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of current programs and identify areas for improvement.¹¹⁰

Lack of comprehensive and disaggregated data on GBV incidents hinders the ability to develop targeted interventions and measure the effectiveness of response efforts.¹¹¹

99 UNSG. 2024. Issue of child, early and forced marriage Report of the UN Secretary-General no A/79/308. Retrieved from: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/236/99/pdf/n2423699.pdf>

100 UNHCR. 2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf.

101 UN-OCHA. 2023. 'Cluster Status Report, October 2023'. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/cluster-status-gender-based-violence-gbv-sub-cluster-response-april-15-october-2023>.

102 UNHCR.2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf.

103 UN-OCHA. 2023. 'Cluster Status Report, October 2023'. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/cluster-status-gender-based-violence-gbv-sub-cluster-response-april-15-october-2023>.

104 UNHCR. 2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf.

105 UN-OCHA. 2023. 'Cluster Status Report, October 2023'. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/cluster-status-gender-based-violence-gbv-sub-cluster-response-april-15-october-2023>.

106 UN-OCHA. 2023. 'Cluster Status Report, October 2023'. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/cluster-status-gender-based-violence-gbv-sub-cluster-response-april-15-october-2023>.

107 UNHCR. 2024. 'Gender-Based Violence Update, June 2024'. Available t: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109767> (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

108 Key informant interviews, 13/11/2024, 23/11/2024 and 08/12/2024

109 UN-OCHA. 2023. 'Cluster Status Report, October 2023'. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/cluster-status-gender-based-violence-gbv-sub-cluster-response-april-15-october-2023>.

110 UNHCR. 2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf.

111 UNHCR. 2023. 'Protection Brief, December 2023'. Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/GBV%20Brief-Sudan%20Situation-December%202023_Final.pdf (Accessed: 9 December 2024).

c. The role of Women Led Organizations

Women Led Organizations (WLOs) have been at the forefront of providing services to GBV survivors, and have a presence in both SAF and RSF-held areas.¹¹² While some WLOs worked on GBV prior to the current conflict, many had no previous humanitarian or GBV experience and redirected their resources and programs to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs.¹¹³ One-and-a-half years on, they continue to operate despite challenges including insecurity, poor and inconsistent communication (internet) networks, and lack of financial and material resources.

The GBV AoR has a national working group and 16 sub-national working groups coordinating referral pathways including by engaging with local WLOs working on GBV. WLOs are also active in the GiHA Working Group and PSEA Network. Despite efforts by agencies and organizations to work with WLOs, some WLOs feel that their important role in responding to the crisis and in building the resilience of communities on the ground goes largely unrecognized. This has implications for their access to funding, support, and training, and shapes the narrative of who is responding.¹¹⁴

“There are actors on the ground willing to cooperate but we are not on the radar – why is that?” Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, 25/11/2024.

Some of these challenges may be due to the under-prioritization of GBV services combined with strict funding modalities and procedural requirements of donor agencies, which are difficult for smaller WLOs to meet. Additional challenges may include not being part of existing

coordination structures, fragmentation across organizations (due to the traditional silos in humanitarian response), and competition for resources and recognition. Smaller WLOs located outside the capital, or Port Sudan, or with management who do not speak English, are at an even greater disadvantage and may remain invisible to donors. As of November 2024, less than 2 per cent of the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) reached local women’s organizations in direct partnership.¹¹⁵

According to a UN report, if donors/UN agencies want to partner with WLOs to support the urgently-needed scale up of GBV services, it is critical for them to adapt to WLOs and not the other way round.¹¹⁶ The Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), is one positive example of a flexible fund designed for WLOs that includes holistic support for programme response and institutional strengthening.¹¹⁷

A conceptual shift that views WLOs as strategic partners, rather than as clients for hire to deliver services is also required. As one key informant noted, WLOs can be strategic partners for service delivery as well as data collection, monitoring, analysis, and early warning.¹¹⁸

“The current crisis provides an opportunity to have an impactful model of localization in Sudan...WLOs are not traditional responders, they build resilience and create the environment that allows communities to stay together, build their solidarity, and move forward to invent new solutions,” Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, 25/11/2024.

d. Data, Documentation, and Advocacy

Data on GBV incidents, including CRSV, is notoriously difficult to collect particularly in the midst of an active conflict. Ethical and safety considerations must also be considered. In Sudan, lack of GBV data is exacerbated by a culture of silence, stigma, and shame, fear of retaliation, lack of safe and effective ways of reporting.¹¹⁹

¹¹² Local WLOs have greater ability to understand and navigate social and community norms and local services (compared to the UN and INGOs), and thus have greater potential to deliver GBV services in a targeted and effective manner. They are often the first point of contact for GBV survivors as they are trusted in their community. Source: Interaction, GBV and Women-led Responses in Sudan, 18 April 2024. Retrieved from: [\(InterAction, April 2024\)](https://www.interaction.org/blog/gbv-and-women-led-responses-in-sudan/#:-:text=Rates%20of%20GBV&text=Humanitarian%20organizations%20report%20women%20and,sexual%20violence%20has%20been%20prevalent) ; Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, conducted on 25/11/2024.; Also, a short survey of WLOs carried out by UN Women revealed that they were working on protection including providing various services along the GBV referral pathways. The main challenge they reported facing was seeking justice for the survivors of GBV due to a breakdown of the justice infrastructure. Source: UN Women, Gender Alert No.1, Women and girls of Sudan: Fortitude amid the flame of war, September 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/gender-alert-women-and-girls-of-sudan-fortitude-amid-the-flame-of-war>

¹¹³ Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, 25/11/2024, 25/11/2024

¹¹⁴ Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, conducted on 25/11/2024.

¹¹⁵ Sudanese Women Humanitarian Leaders’ Collective Ask to ERC, 26 November 2024.

¹¹⁶ United Nations. (2024). Technical guidance note on gender and the localization agenda. Retrieved from: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/236/99/pdf/n2423699.pdf> (Accessed: 6 December 2024).

¹¹⁷ As of July 2024, the WPHF funded 4 projects that could be considered emergency, totaling USD 620,000, Male UN Staff, Key Informant Interview, conducted on 03/12/2024.

¹¹⁸ Female WLO Representative, Key Informant Interview, conducted on 25/11/2024.

¹¹⁹ Including domestic legislation that puts the burden on the survivor if she wants to file a case or access abortion, Female, Government Representative, Key informant interview, conducted on 26/11/2024.

^{120,121} insecurity, multiple displacements, communication blackouts, limited access to health facilities, and silencing of human rights defenders, journalists, and health workers.^{122, 123}

For example, GBV actors report being pressured or forced into sharing (confidential) information, or being tracked and intimidated by security actors. This is taking a psychological toll on their staff. GBV services have also been shut down and survivors are afraid to seek much-needed support.¹²⁴

According to OHCHR, efforts to establish processes and mechanisms to document human rights violations, including CRSV, and ensure accountability and justice for survivors, have been undermined by “layers of violence” including intimidation, attacks and killings of HDRs, journalists, lawyers, and health providers.¹²⁵ The need to

establish robust accountability mechanisms that can hold perpetrators to account, including for reprisal actions against GBV actors, is critical.

Women-led civil society organizations continue to emphasize the urgent need for stronger advocacy and accountability for CRSV, expressing frustration over the lack of concrete actions taken by both the international community and humanitarian systems. However, GBV service providers have observed a troubling interaction between heightened attention to CRSV and an increase in targeted attacks against individuals and organizations perceived as providing services to survivors.

It is critical to acknowledge that such reprisals and attacks connected to the attention to CRSV is not a new phenomenon in Sudan. Similar trends of reprisals against GBV actors were observed during the humanitarian crises of 2002 and 2006, highlighting a persistent and systemic challenge in addressing GBV in conflict and crisis settings. Trends of targeting service providers for their support to GBV survivors were documented well before April 2023, reflecting long-standing risks in this context.

This underscores the need for a nuanced approach that balances international accountability for CRSV and addressing impunity for all forms of GBV with robust measures to protect local GBV service providers and survivors from reprisals, ensuring their safety and the continuity of essential services.

- 120 Human Rights Watch. 2024. World Report 2024: Sudan. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/sudan>.
- 121 Insecurity Insight. 2023. Sudan Situation Report: Aid Agencies Access and Security Management, September 2023. Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Sudan-Situation-Report-Aid-Agencies-Access-and-Security-Management-September-2023.pdf>.
- 122 Human Rights Watch. (2024). World Report 2024: Sudan. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/sudan>.
- 123 Insecurity Insight. 2023. Sudan Situation Report: Aid Agencies Access and Security Management, September 2023. Retrieved from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Sudan-Situation-Report-Aid-Agencies-Access-and-Security-Management-September-2023.pdf>.
- 124 Female UN Staff, Key Informant Interview, conducted on 23/11/2024.
- 125 OHCHR. 2024. Press Release, Sudan UN fact finding mission. August 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/sudan-un-fact-finding-mission-outlines-extensive-human-rights-violations>.



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V. CALL TO ACTION

All actors need to immediately implement the recommendations highlighted in the report of the Independent Fact Finding Mission (FFM), including those related to victims and survivors of sexual violence and the Humanitarian Country Team 10-Point Plan to Strengthen the Response to CRSV (August 2024).

Parties to the conflict

1. Cease all acts of violence and address impunity of human rights violations, including sexual violence, and protect and safeguard the lives, dignity, and wellbeing of women, girls, men, and boys, including GBV survivors, in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.
2. Ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to affected people, including access to post-rape care and protection support, and ensure respect for humanitarian action and providers.
3. Protect GBV service providers, female health workers, female humanitarian and volunteer workers, women HRDs, staff of WLOs, and female journalists and lawyers, from threats, attacks, killings and reprisals.

UN

4. Prioritize and take decisive action including engaging with parties to the conflict at the political level to prevent and protect against backlash, reprisals and threats, including targeted GBV attacks against GBV workers, humanitarian actors, WLOs and HRDs.
5. Reinstatement the role of the Senior Women Protection Adviser and strengthen efforts of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC) and develop the national level Framework of Cooperation signed with authorities to systematically address CRSV. Re-establish the MARA Working Group to systematically monitor, analyze, and report on CRSV trends, ensure accountability, inform response, and guide advocacy.

Donors

6. Increase funding for GBV prevention and response prioritizing dedicated and flexible funding for WLOs. Ensure GBV programmes are treated as life-saving in decision-making on funding and response.

7. Strengthen financial and technical support to WLOs to continue (and scale up) providing GBV prevention and response services and relevant community-based initiatives through a holistic approach that includes flexible, core, and long-term funding, greater resources, including for operational scale up and institutional capacity development, increased security, communication (internet), and enhanced technical capacities as required.

Sudan Humanitarian Fund

Ensure gender consideration in localization strategy that guides humanitarian funding allocations by:

8. Increasing dedicated and flexible funding to WLOs in next allocations and prioritizations for direct partnerships.
9. Target WLOs for capacity building to strengthen eligibility for SHF partnerships through dedicated efforts to course-correct low WLO partnerships.
10. Strengthen learning and coordination with WPHF mechanisms to support women led organizations receiving UN funds through other mechanisms and funds.

Humanitarian actors

11. Scale up survivor-centered GBV prevention and response services including:
 - Clinical management of rape (CMR) services;
 - Principled safe shelters and one-stop centers for survivors;
 - Sexual and reproductive health services;
 - Mental health and psychosocial support services for GBV survivors and community members;
 - Comprehensive GBV case management;
 - Roll out GBV IMS;
 - Safe confidential dignified options for reporting;
 - Referrals to other services, including those provided by other sectors;
 - Services that help women and girls identify themselves if legal identification document have been lost.

- GBV legal services;
 - Capacity development of front line actors to deliver a GBV survivor-centered response, and training and support on how to deal with sensitive issues of GBV documentation, and related security issues;
 - Strengthened prevention of SEA in GBV interventions;
 - Programming for the prevention of intimate partner violence and harmful practices, in particular child, early, and forced marriage and unions and female-genital mutilation;
 - Material support such as dignity kits, and other forms of NFIs to assist GBV survivors to rebuild their lives;
 - Provision of mobility aids and personal hygiene kits, particularly to women and girls with disabilities;
 - Livelihood/economic empowerment interventions for enhancing survivors' recovery and GBV risk mitigation.
12. Strengthen GBV coordination, coherence and visibility for quality GBV services, including by:
- providing greater clarity on the gaps and coverage of GBV services through proper service mapping, respecting the need to redact sensitive identification information and still allowing actors to ascertain available sectoral service elements.
 - revisiting the referral pathway system that can simultaneously protect GBV service providers (who are overwhelmingly local WLOs) from backlash, but also make referral effective and have a wider reach.
 - increasing GBV service delivery by international NGOs which would provide greater cover to local humanitarian actors which have been at the forefront of the response and thus shouldering the majority of the risks.
13. Ensure access to timely and life-saving health care, establish emergency service points, one-stop centers, and specialized trauma care including fistula clinics so that survivors can access desperately needed SRH and MHPSS services.
14. Facilitate survivor access to safe abortion services and care removing administrative barriers.
15. Address the needs of pregnant women and girls, and children born of rape and their mothers, including providing psychosocial support, legal assistance, and protection from stigma and discrimination and human rights violations.
16. Address food insecurity and economic vulnerability that leads to negative coping mechanisms such as transactional sex, and child/forced marriage; develop programs where people can have more dignified support – empower women's ability to sustain themselves over the long term.
17. Support interventions that challenge the stigma and silence around GBV broadly and CRSV specifically, through community-based context-specific interventions including working through local protection committees from the same community.
-
- “Changing the mindset on GBV is not easy, you have to be flexible, patient...you have to create a safe and culturally sensitive space for people to talk about it...you have to be smart, alert to the local community language and customs – to work on GBV you have to create allies....,” Female Government Representative, Key Informant Interview, 26/11/2024.**
-
18. Work with men and boys, including collaboration with men in leadership roles, to promote the rights of GBV survivors and counter narratives that blame victims as well as programming which provides men and boys with the tools and space to access healthy peer support, develop self-reflection skills and non-violent coping mechanisms to address the specific impacts of this conflict, and support male survivors of GBV.
19. Enhance WLOs' access to humanitarian decision-making spaces.

VI. UN WOMEN'S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO EMPOWERING WOMEN AND ADDRESSING GBV, INCLUDING CRSV IN SUDAN - A MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

In response to Sudan's escalating humanitarian crisis, UN Women is implementing a comprehensive strategy to address GBV, including CRSV. The strategy is guided by the principles of the GiHA framework and aligned with the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. UN Women's interventions focus on the prevention of and response to GBV and protection from CRSV, as well as participation and relief and recovery efforts. These strategies are reinforced by the application of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines, ensuring that all responses to all forms of GBV are effective and rooted in a rights-based approach. The role of women-led organizations (WLOs) is central to this approach as they lead localized, context-specific interventions that directly prevent and address GBV in their communities.

International Frameworks and Advocacy for Addressing Gender-Based Violence

UN Women's work is guided by key international frameworks that shape responses to GBV (including CRSV) emphasizing accountability, justice, and the end of impunity: UNSCR 1820, UNSCR 1960, and IASC Guidelines.

These frameworks support UN Women's efforts in Sudan, ensuring that responses to GBV are rooted in justice and accountability for survivors, while addressing the structural gender inequalities that fuel such violence.

Strategic Interventions

Building Technical Capacities

- **Technical Skills:** UN Women has equipped 19 **WLOs** with essential technical skills to address GBV (including CRSV) in their communities. This is in addition to training on GiHA, Accountability for Affected Populations (AAP) and Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) This capacity building strengthens local ownership, enhances the ability to deliver direct support to survivors, and could contribute towards preventing further violence.
- **Platforms for Engagement:** Safe spaces and forums are established where women and girls can share their experiences, advocate for their rights, and engage in decision-making processes. These platforms contribute to the protection of women and girls and enable them to shape solutions to

GBV and CRSV. UN Women has also established 8 Sudan Women in Humanitarian Response Forums to enhance women's and girls' participation in humanitarian response.

- **Addressing Root Causes of Inequality:** UN Women's initiatives address the structural and gendered inequalities that drive GBV such as discriminatory social norms and patriarchal systems. In addition to working with women and girls, UN Women engages men and boys as allies to challenge and transform harmful norms.

Strengthening Community Responses to GBV and CRSV

- **Training Initiatives:** UN Women has trained representatives from WLOs and local community groups on GBV prevention and PSEA and use of various CFM channels to facilitate the affected women and girls to report abuses, express concerns, and provide feedback in a safe and confidential space.
- **Dignity Kits:** Two thousand (2,000) dignity kits have been distributed to address the immediate needs of displaced women and girls, while an equal number of kits are on the high seas. These kits ensure their dignity and provide necessary support during emergencies, playing a key role in protection from further abuse in displacement settings.
- **Safe Spaces:** The establishment of safe spaces in areas that are heavily affected by GBV and CRSV provides vital services such as psychosocial support, protection from further violence, and community-based interventions. These spaces are essential in helping survivors of GBV and CRSV rebuild their lives.

Economic Empowerment to Reduce Vulnerability

- **Livelihood Opportunities:** UN Women's economic empowerment programmes—including vocational training and income-generating activities—help displaced women gain financial independence. These programmes reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, providing them with the resources needed to support themselves and their families.
- **Localized Initiatives:** By partnering with **WLOs**, **UN Women tailors programmes to promote women's economic participation in conflict-affected areas**, thus enhancing resilience and reducing dependency.

Advocating for the Establishment of Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA)

UN Women is advocating for the establishment of MARA for CRSV, which will enable the documentation of violations, raise awareness, and hold perpetrators accountable. MARA will play a critical role in ensuring that CRSV cases are recorded, investigated, and addressed within Sudan's humanitarian response framework.

A Vision for Sustainable Change

Combining capacity building, economic empowerment, prevention, and protection efforts, UN Women's integrated approach strategically addresses both GBV and CRSV. By aligning with the GiHA, WPS agenda, GBV in emergencies guidelines, IASC guidelines, and other international frameworks, UN Women ensures that women and girls in conflict-affected regions of Sudan are at the heart of all humanitarian responses.

Moving forward, UN Women will:

1. Continue building **leadership capacities** in **WLOs** to ensure sustainable, grassroots responses to GBV and CRSV.
2. Engage **men and boys** as key allies in comprehensive actions to prevent all forms of GBV against women and girls, challenging harmful gender norms.
3. **Strengthen community-based responses to GBV** (including CRSV) by increasing access to training, safe spaces, and protective services for survivors.

These actions underscore UN Women's unwavering commitment to gender equality, the protection of women and girls, and the realization of their rights and dignity in Sudan.

About Women Count

As part of its response to global challenges in collecting and using timely and reliable gender data, since 2016, UN Women has implemented Women Count, a multi-stakeholder global strategy for a radical shift in how gender statistics are produced, used, and promoted to inform policy and advocacy on gender equality.

UN Women would particularly like to thank the Governments of Australia, France, Ireland, Italy, and Sweden, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their generous financial support to the Women Count programme.

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