

GENDER, CONFLICT AND ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS IN EAST SUDAN

Women Empowerment for Resilience, Inclusion, Sustainability and Environment
in Eastern States Project



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | III |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 1 |
| COUNTRY PROFILE | 5 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS | 3 |
| 1.1. Background | 6 |
| 1.2. Conceptual Framework | 7 |
| 1.3. Methodology | 8 |
| 1.4. Limitations of the Study | 8 |
| 1.5. Structure of the Report | 9 |
| 2. GENDER, CONFLICT, AND THE ENVIRONMENT | 10 |
| 2.1. Conflict in Eastern Sudan: An Overview | 11 |
| 2.2. Understanding the Linkages between Gender, Environment, and Conflict in Eastern Sudan | 12 |
| 2.3. Gender and Conflict | 15 |
| 2.3.1. Root Causes and Triggers of Conflict in Eastern Sudan | 15 |
| 2.3.2. Gender implications of conflict | 19 |
| 2.4. Role of Women During Conflict and Peace- Building Activities | 21 |
| 3. GENDER AND THE ENVIRONMENT | 23 |
| 4. STAKEHOLDERS AND KEY ACTORS | 29 |
| 4.1. Key Actors from Civil Society and Entry Points | 29 |
| 4.2. Opportunities and Challenges to Community Resilience | 30 |
| 4.3. Suggested Roles for Religious and Community Leaders in Addressing Gender-Conflict-Environment Issues | 33 |
| 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 34 |
| 5.1. Conclusion | 34 |
| 5.1.1. Gender and Conflict | 34 |
| 5.1.2. Gender and the Environment | 36 |
| 5.2. Recommendations | 37 |
| 5.2.1. General Recommendations to the Government | 37 |
| 5.2.2. General Recommendations to UN Women and other Development Partners | 38 |
| 5.2.3. State-Specific Recommendations for UN Women and other Development Partners | 39 |
| REFERENCES | 40 |

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| TABLE 1. State-Specific Recommendations for UN Women and other Development Partners | 4 |
| TABLE 2. The Impacts of Conflict | 20 |
| TABLE 3. Modes of Participation in Conflict Resolution | 21 |
| TABLE 4. International and Regional Environmental Conventions to which Sudan is a Signatory | 24 |
| TABLE 5. Determining Factors for State Responses | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| FIGURE 1. Linkages Between Climate Change, Gender, and Conflict | 13 |
| FIGURE 2. Participation in Conflict Resolution | 21 |
| FIGURE 3. Principal Modes of Participation in Conflict Resolution | 22 |
| FIGURE 4. Drought and Desertification in Red Sea State | 25 |
| FIGURE 5. Local Women's Production | 25 |

ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ANC | Antenatal Care |
| AICS | Italian Agency for Development Cooperation |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| ESPA | East Sudan Peace Agreement |
| ESRDF | Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FNC | Forest National Corporation |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| KM | Kilometers |
| MICS | Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey |
| NDA | National Democratic Alliance |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OOP | Out-of-pocket |
| S3M | Simple Spatial Surveying Method |
| SBCC | Social and Behavior Change Campaigns |
| SDGS | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SPLA | Sudan People's Liberation Army |
| SRF | Sudan Revolutionary Forces |
| TGS | Transitional Government of Sudan |
| TMC | Transitional Military Council |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sudan is a country that has been plunged in a turmoil of conflict since its independence in 1955. The causes of the conflict may change and vary over time and according to the implications of the proxy causes that may arise. However, the impact of the conflict remains unchanged, resulting in loss of lives, massive displacement, environmental degradation, impoverishment and the escalation of poverty, and human rights violations including sexual and gender-based violence. The impact of the conflict negatively affects the entire population, but women and children suffer the most. This study is intended to explore the linkages between gender, environment, and conflict in eastern Sudan, which is a region with a recent history of frequent conflicts, and also a region hard hit by environmental degradation due to cyclical droughts and heavy deforestation, among several other environmental shocks.

This report provides a short contextual analysis of the conflict in Sudan and specifically in eastern Sudan, and describes the methodology used, which is a triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data in addition to secondary information generated by other organisations and the government.

The main conclusions reached were as follows:

Competition over depleting resources remains the most significant trigger of conflict in the region of eastern Sudan. Imbalances in power relations in eastern Sudan rotate around numerous dichotomies: tribal leaders versus local communities, urban versus rural areas, rich farmers versus small farmers and pastoralists, the eastern Sudan region versus the center, and indigenous groups versus migrants. The rise in tribalism and tribal polarization is attributed people's perceptions and judgements of each other, causing growing individual and social discrimination and exclusion. These imbalances of power interact to fuel the current conflicts.

The root causes of conflict in region have been attributed to:

- **Political factors:** conflicts along borders, administrative and political aspirations of various groups, and political and tribal divisions within localities,
- **Cultural and socio-economic factors:** poverty and poor service provision,
- **Racism and tribal biases:** unequal sharing of power and wealth, clashes of interest between nomads and settlers, competition over natural resources such as land and water, and

- **Other factors:** weak political parties, poor governance, uneven development, and the inability to manage diversity.

Women in eastern Sudan face many obstacles in their daily lives, which are only made more difficult during conflict, which heightens their isolation and limited access to resources and opportunities. Furthermore, the roles of women and men in conflict-bound regions differ significantly. Men have greater and more direct roles in escalating conflicts while women have indirect, limited roles in strengthening tribal polarization at family and community level.

Women also face strict restrictions in terms of mobility, which limit their access to markets and services including education, training, and health, as well as their opportunities for social interaction within their neighborhoods. Despite the significant impact conflict has on women, they play a very limited role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. They are excluded from tribal councils and native administrations that negotiate truce agreements between the disputing parties, and rarely attend national peacebuilding talks such as the Juba discussions. This exclusion further reduces representation of women's issues in development agendas.

Additional factors that have exacerbated the changes in the regional environment include:

- Deforestation due to overcutting of forests to expand agricultural land and create settlements,
- Mining practices that result in land toxicity from waste products and use of mercury, as well as landscape changes that result in the accumulation of water from heavy rains in excavation pits,
- Land grabbing practices by corporate bodies that invest in large, mechanized rain-fed farms that draw on natural water sources, and
- Overgrowth of mesquite trees, which prevent the growth of other plants and vegetation.

Women have limited access to land and irrigation. Mechanized farming has put more pressure on women pastoralists and small farmers in general. It is also responsible for deforestation, which in turn reduces women's and pastoralists' access to forest products.

Women and men face many challenges as a result of environmental issues, including deforestation due to overcutting of forests to expand agricultural land and create settlements, mining practices that result in land toxicity from waste products and the use of mercury, as well as landscape changes that result in the accumulation of water from heavy rains water in excavation pits, land grabbing practices by corporate bodies that invest in large, mechanized farms in rain-fed areas, drawing on natural water sources, and overgrowth of mesquite trees, which prevent the growth of other plants.

Accordingly, the following recommendations have been suggested.

General Recommendations to the Government

- Ensure women and girls' participation as essential partners in climate change, environmental responses, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, as well as their ability to participate in decision-making spaces by incorporating gender considerations into climate change mitigation plans at all levels: local, state, national, and adapt resilience-building livelihood programs to women's needs.

- Enhance the development of inclusive, gender- and conflict-sensitive natural resource management mechanisms.
- Establish clear mechanisms to protect women and girls from gender-based violence by setting up protection centers in the localities, assigning protection specialists to public institutions such as public schools and hospitals, and creating a hotline to take complaints. These efforts must be complemented by mass media campaigns to raise public awareness of the services.
- Involve civil society organisations in government and NGO planning in an advisory capacity in the areas of conflict resolution, raising community awareness of environmental threats, and devising new incentives and other methods to encourage individuals to adopt environmental protection initiatives.
- Poverty reduction programs should capitalize on the resources in the states, such as livestock and fertile lands, focusing on innovative mechanisms to improve production, and the promotion of marketing opportunities.
- Establish alternative herding routes to reduce conflicts between farmers and herders, in consultation with native administration, landowners, and herders.
- Build local dams and water harvesting tools to provide protection from torrential rains and floods, as well as to ensure a consistent water supply throughout the year.
- Raise the awareness of government-owned companies about the importance of preserving the environment.
- Impose strict guidelines for mining and agricultural projects.
- Conduct routine assessments on the impact of mining activities and water pollution due to waste disposal on the local environment.

General Recommendations to UN Women and Other Development Partners

- Raise women's political awareness and train them on legislation, rights, and conflict-resolution techniques.
- Include women in peacebuilding, negotiation, and implementation processes, including key initiatives such as the East Sudan Conference.
- Invest in promoting women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making and policymaking around climate change mitigation, natural resource management, and conflict resolution.
- Conduct an in-depth study to assess the impact of nutritional habits and the lack of latrines on women's health.
- Educate women about the peacebuilding process, and how to properly raise and educate future generations to avoid perpetuating tribalism or violence against women.
- Support youth-led projects, vocational training, the promotion of open dialogue on social peace, and constructive community works.
Enhance climate-resilient agriculture project interventions in areas severely affected by climate change.
- Address intersectionality between gender, conflict, and the environment by mainstreaming gender and environment perspectives in projects, policies, and peace processes design to intersect.
- Provide support for a social protection network for women with the allocation of a telephone hotline to report all forms of violence against women.
- Support the creation of job opportunities for women by encouraging small-scale enterprises.
- Provide institutional and technical support to identify priorities and design plans that address and respond to local climate, gender inequality and peace issues.
- Strengthen the internal communication and organisation of women's civil society

organisations and encourage the establishment of a regional umbrella agenda to strengthen their leadership.

- Promote the employment and engagement of women and youth in the promotion of inter-tribal conflict resolution efforts and ending hate speech.

Women also face strict restrictions in terms of mobility, which limit their access to markets and services including education, training, and health, as well as their opportunities for social interaction within their neighborhoods.

| Table 1: State-specific Recommendations For Un Women And Other Development Partners | | |
|--|--|---|
| Al-Gadarif | | |
| Recommendations | Action | Target/entry point |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform agriculture, forestry and livestock policies and frameworks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the revision of agriculture and forestry state and national laws, policies and plans on agriculture, forestry, and livestock. Ensure the mainstreaming of gender and social responsibility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry CSOs Farmers' associations and groups |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote peacebuilding practices between pastoralists and farmers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate state-level dialogue forums to build trust between pastoralists and farmers, ensuring equal participation by women and mainstreaming of women's agendas in these forums. Strengthen communication between women pastoralists and women farmers through the creation of nuclear forums that discuss shared agendas and provide relevant training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's associations Community champions |
| Kassala | | |
| Recommendations | Action | Target/entry point |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination of a culture of peace and non-violence among women and youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support women-led peacebuilding initiatives and efforts. Conduct social media campaigns focusing on peacebuilding and combating hate speech. Provide civic education and training for women and youth, especially in rural areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community champions Women's associations CSOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of fire-arms control protocols | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the implementation of recall programs to reduce the possession of unregistered arms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local protection units |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the rights of local women and men in utilizing their own land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train men and women affected by the Setit Dam to advocate against the negative impacts of the dam and claim compensation for their displacement. Provide access to safe drinking water and basic services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community champions |
| Red Sea | | |
| Recommendations | Action | Target/entry point |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing livelihood programs and facilitating women's access to markets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop contextualized training utilizing local resources such as pearls, leather, and fisheries to improve their economic situations. Strengthen production chains and create linkages between existing associations to improve the quality of products and ensure their marketability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating self-employment opportunities for women and youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change negative community perceptions about mesquite trees and train women and youth on alternative management and use of mesquite in oils, compressed coal, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing corporate mining practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct studies to assess the effects of mercury on local health. Conduct public campaigns addressing the hazards in relation to reproductive rights, environmental health, and water toxicity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs |

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

This section provides an introduction to the analysis through an overview of the national and regional profile, as well as outlining the study approach, the methodology and the conceptual framework used.

Country Profile

Sudan is the third largest country in Africa, occupying approximately 1.9 million square kilometers. The total population is estimated at 43.85 million, growing at a rate of 2.8% annually. Of those, 88% are settled, 49% in urban areas, while 8% are nomads (World Bank, 2022). Almost 2% of the population is internally displaced: 1.4% reside in settlements, and the remaining 0.6% live in cattle camps (World Population Review, 2021). There has been increasing urbanization due to natural disasters, civil conflicts, and poor conditions in rural areas.

Sudan comprises 18 states, each divided into 184 localities; their number often changes over time, due to redrawing of the existing boundaries. Sudan, with its multiparty system, is a federated republic with powers devolved to states under the Local Government Act (2003), often referred to as the Decentralization Act. However, precise legislative and organisational arrangements may vary from state to state.

The country also receives considerable numbers of refugees from neighboring Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad, Central African Republic, and South Sudan, and, in recent years, significant numbers of Syrian refugees and several thousand Yemeni refugees. The country is both a temporary and a long-term host country for refugees and migrants through its position at the crossroads of the large, complex, and constantly evolving Horn of Africa migration route. Sudan is also a country of origin for migration due to high poverty, unemployment, conflict, and insecurity. At the beginning of 2022, Sudan hosted more than one million refugees and asylum seekers (UNICEF, 2021).

Economically, Sudan is categorized as a lower-middle income country (The World Bank, 2022). In 2020, the contribution of agricultural sector to Sudan's gross domestic product (GDP) was 20% percent, while industry contributed by approximately 23% and the services sector contributed by 36%. This shows a significant drop from 2010 estimates in which the agricultural sector's contribution which was 31% percent, while the contributions of the industrial and services sector increased from 21% and 30%, respectively. Throughout the country, poverty levels are increasing due to the economic recession since 2018, recent economic adjustments (exchange rate and subsidy reforms), the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate shocks. Recent estimates state that the poverty headcount rate was 64.2% in 2020 (using the national poverty line). Higher poverty rates exist in rural areas of the country. The estimated incidence of poverty is 52.2% in urban areas and 70.6 % in rural areas (MFEP, 2020)

Over the past 30 years, Sudan has been among the most rapidly warming locations on the globe. Average temperatures are projected to increase by up to 3°C by 2050, with increased risk for recurrent droughts and floods. Climate change increases the vulnerability of certain communities, such as farmers, pastoralists and those who rely on rain-fed agriculture. Natural disasters, such as desertification, drought, and flooding, further compromise the deteriorating socio-economic situation of communities and households. Additionally, as pastoralists and farmers fight over resources, pre-existing communal tensions increase. Disputes over land tenure and rights of ownership, access, and use



of natural resources such as land and water resources are now at the heart of many conflicts in Sudan.

Sudan is a prime example of prolonged conflicts in Africa. The country has not experienced genuine stability since it gained its independence from Britain in 1956. Sudan is quite polarized, and duality shapes the individual as well as the collective mind sets. Such polarization is manifested in the dichotomies of the urban/rural, center/periphery, men/women, old/young, haves/have nots, Muslims/non-Muslims, modern/traditional, pro-government/opposition, etc. These dichotomies have contributed to creating and enforcing major power relations within communities in Sudan. For example, men's assumed superiority grants them power over women that normalizes women's oppression and men's privileges to the extent of being internalized in the culture of both men and women.

The linkages between conflict and environment in Sudan are twofold (UNEP, 2017). On one hand, the country's long history of conflict has had significant impacts on its environment. Indirect impacts such as population displacement, lack of governance, conflict-related resource exploitation and underinvestment in sustainable development have been the most severe consequences to date. On the other hand, environmental issues have been and continue to be contributing causes of conflict, including competition over land, waters, as well as land use issues related to agricultural land, and are important causative factors in the instigation and perpetuation of conflict in Sudan.

Currently, Sudan is facing a wide range of environmental challenges, either human made or natural. These include deforestation, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and habitat, pollution of air, land, and water, conflicts over diminishing natural resources, food insecurity, poor environmental health, prevalence of environment-related diseases such as malaria, and poor waste and sanitation services in urban areas. All of these issues are intensified by climate change.

Throughout the country, poverty levels are increasing due to the economic recession since 2018, recent economic adjustments (exchange rate and subsidy reforms), the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate shocks.



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1.1 Background

This analysis has been conducted as part of the project on “Women’s Economic Empowerment for Resilience, Inclusion, Sustainability and Environment in Eastern States.” The project is funded by the European Union (EU) and is being implemented by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The project aims to create an enabling environment for the economic empowerment of women living in the most vulnerable situations in Kassala, Al-Gadarif and Red Sea states.

The study aims to provide an understanding of the context of the eastern states, reflecting on the interplay between gender, conflict, and the environment. The findings of the study will support both AICS and UN Women in tackling some of the differential impacts caused by conflict and environmental degradation on the lives of women.

- To fulfill the objectives of the gender, environment and conflict analysis, the study should meet the following objectives:
- Identify the root, proximate causes and triggers of conflict in the eastern states
- Show the extent to which women have contributed to the escalation of conflict, reflect on how conflict has affected gender roles and relations and identify the overall effects brought by conflict on various aspects of men’s and women’s lives
- Elaborate on how environmental degradation has contributed to the escalation of conflict and reflect on the role of gender as socially constructed and of gender relations in the escalation/de-escalation of resource-related conflict in eastern Sudan
- Identify the opportunities available to women and men and the challenges they face regarding environmental issues (land degradation, access to water, climate change, etc.), as well as how conflict has affected their opportunities and exacerbated their challenges
- Identify the available mechanisms of conflict resolution and natural resources management and show how they interlink, reflect on women’s participation in conflict resolution and natural resources management, and identify the barriers women’s participation in these mechanisms



- Show the stakeholders' role in managing resources and responding to conflict, and consider the effects brought by conflict and environmental degradation on women and men
- Identify clear policy recommendations to address the causes and effects of conflict and environmental degradation on women and men
- Draw up specific recommendations based on this analysis to support an enabling environment for the economic empowerment of women living in vulnerable and conflict-affected communities.

The study was conducted by a team of independent consultants during the period running from September 2021 to January 2022. The consultancy focused on undertaking a gender, conflict, and environment analysis to inform the project's planning, design, and implementation, giving special consideration to the specific context, social environment, and gender equality determinants of the respective states.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underlying this study was adapted from a social inclusion model addressing the unequal power relations experienced by people on grounds of gender, wealth, ability, location, ethnicity, language or agency or a combination of these dimensions. It focuses on the need for action to re-balance power relations, reduce disparities and ensure equal rights, opportunities, and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identity. Only in doing so can we ensure that all individuals have the resources, opportunities, and capabilities they need to acquire.

Social inclusion is rooted in the International Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), which stipulates that everyone has the right to: education (Article 26), work (Article 23), freely participate in the cultural life of the community (Article 27), and take part in the government of their country (Article 21).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) also emphasizes the need to eliminate every form of discrimination, as discrimination is a consequence of the subordination and oppression women and girls are subjected to because of their gender. CEDAW also recognizes that to achieve substantive (as opposed to formal) equality, different treatment of males and females may be permissible when that treatment is aimed at overcoming

discrimination. Article 5 "requires State parties to modify social and cultural patterns of men and women to eliminate practices based on the idea of sex role stereotyping or the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes" (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003).

As such, gender inequality is a case of exclusion – where one set of identity groups (in this case women) are not recognized as being of equal value and therefore not given equal access to resources and prevented from exercising their full human rights. Gender inequalities and power imbalances can be key factors driving chronic poverty, food insecurity, poor health, violence against women, and violent conflict itself.

When approaches to development take gender into account, they can help reduce gender-based violence, enhance gender equality, defuse conflict, and lead to more sustainable peace. A project seeking to strengthen the educational sector, for example, should be designed with an understanding of the different relationships between men, women, boys, and girls, and the specific needs of each.

Gender norms and power dynamics increase women's exposure to gender-based violence (GBV) and impact their capacity to cope with environmental risks such as droughts and decreasing water levels, deforestation, excessive gold mining, deterioration of arable land and degradation of mangrove forests. The causes of skewed power relations and the concept of male superiority cannot be addressed solely by addressing the consequences of discrimination (lack of or denial of opportunities, resources, services, and self-respect).

The root causes of discrimination must also be identified and addressed, including, but not limited to, historical analogies, social narratives designed mainly on negative social norms, the quality of education, an enabling legislative framework, economic exploitation, and independent and free media. *See Annex 1 for a Social Inclusion Framework.*

This study employed a methodology that triangulates quantitative, qualitative, and secondary sources of information to identify and analyze the causes and consequences of women's status in eastern Sudan, aiming to fulfil the main study objective by suggesting practical recommendations that can contribute to progressive change towards balancing the existing unequal gender relations in the region.



1.3 Methodology

The analysis used a mixed methods approach to generate quantitative and qualitative data. The primary audience targeted by the different data collection tools included women and men from state governments, local stakeholders, as well as members of political parties, and community members.

A data merging approach was used to analyze and combine the findings. Quantitative data in the form of numeric information and figures was combined and thematically integrated with qualitative data from the interviews into coherent findings.

Key Informant Interviews: Ninety key informant interviews were conducted in the three states.

The key informant interviews followed a semi-structured format and lasted approximately one to one and a half hour each. The interviews were conducted by state researchers and research assistants.

They targeted technical staff and officials from line state ministries and other bodies, including relevant CSOs, national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and research institutions and universities. *See Annex 3 for the interview guide and list of participants.*

Focus Group Discussions:

A total of 42 focus group discussions (FGDs), lasting one and a half to two hours per session, were conducted with members of local civil society organisations, women's rights, conflict and environment-focused organisations, youth-led organisations and women-led organisations, and community representatives, as well as the informal sector, and media personnel from the selected communities. The FGDs were carried out by the state researchers. See Annex 4 for the interview guide.

Cross-Sectional Survey:

A specially designed questionnaire was used to generate primary data that provided a snapshot of the gender profile of each state. The respondents of the questionnaires were not selected as households, although they lived in households in most cases. A total of 300 questionnaires were administered, lasting approximately one hour each. The survey targeted women from various government institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), private-sector institutes, and the informal sector, as well as local activists, with key objectives of examining the different dimensions of women's lives and situations in

the eastern states, including the root causes and factors leading to social, political, and economic inequity for women. See Annex 2 for the survey questionnaire.

The sample was not selected based on conventional sampling techniques, rather it was a purposive sample meant to include women from different strata in eastern Sudan communities and to observe factors of diversity, such as age, socio-economic status, and the urban/rural mix.

Case Studies:

Three case studies were conducted in selected locations providing an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a particular conflict-related issue directly impacting women and the environment.

This process comprised conducting thorough mapping exercises, key-informant interviews, FGDs, and observational field visits.

In each state, three localities were selected in addition to a case study relevant to the context of each state. In Al-Gadarif, the localities of Alfashaga, Gadarif and Eastern Galabat were selected for the analysis, and the case study was conducted in Alfashaga, although the data available was insufficient to allow the case study to be published on a stand-alone basis; it was, however, included in the data analyzed.

Red Sea localities included Port Sudan, Aryab, and Ageig, with Haya for the case study. As for Kassala, the analysis included the localities of New Halfa, Nahar Atbara, and Kassala, while the case study focused on Wad Ahelaw locality. (For more details see annex 5.) In each of the above localities, different communities were targeted to ensure diversity and an urban/rural mix.

Secondary sources of information and data included previous studies, government reports and records, and other relevant readings.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

There were data gaps, and many relevant statistics were not available or were outdated at the time of data collection. The latest Demographic and Health Survey was conducted in 2005, and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) dates to 2014. In view of the multiple socio-economic, security and even health-related upheavals that the country has experienced in recent years, new data is a priority for establishing a reliable and accurate profile of current gender conditions in Sudan and for



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monitoring future progress towards achieving equitable and inclusive growth for women.

Moreover, state teams encountered various challenges, such as eruption of conflicts in Red Sea state and flooding in Al-Gadarif, which led to delays in the data collection phase. Optimal use was made of available resources to ensure wide coverage. However, the vast size of the region and the lack of passable roads made it a challenge to reach remote areas in the region.

Due to time limitations and the complexity of the context, the assessment was conducted using a purposeful sampling method. This is a common approach in which the researcher identifies a specific number of relevant sources of information with consideration to elements of diversity, such as age, location, ethnicity, and the urban/rural mix.

1.5 Structure of the Report

This report is divided into three sections. Section I is an introductory section including the context of eastern Sudan, the purpose and objectives of the study and the methodology adopted. Section II encompasses the Gender, Conflict and Environmental analysis, the root causes, and triggers of conflict in the eastern states from the perspective of the participants. It also explores the different roles that women from the region play in either escalating or de-escalating conflict eruptions. Section III presents the key stakeholders and entry points in the different states as well as recommendations for action.



2 GENDER, CONFLICT AND THE ENVIRONMENT: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Over the past 30 years, Sudan has been among the most rapidly warming locations on the globe. Average temperatures are projected to increase by up to 3°C by 2050, with an increased risk of recurrent droughts and floods. Climate change increases the vulnerability of certain communities, such as farmers, pastoralists, and others who rely on rain-fed agriculture. Natural disasters, such as desertification, drought, and flooding, further compromise the deteriorating socio-economic situation of communities and households. Additionally, as pastoralists and farmers fight over resources, pre-existing communal tensions increase. Disputes over land tenure and rights of ownership, access, and use of natural resources such as land and water are now at the heart of many conflicts in Sudan.

As such, the first chapter of this section discusses the root causes and triggers of conflict in the eastern states from the perspective of the participants. It also explores the different roles that women from the region play in either escalating or de-escalating conflict eruptions. The second chapter focuses on identifying the different forms of environmental change in the region, while elaborating on how it has affected the opportunities available to women and men and the challenges they face regarding environmental issues. This section aims to understand the overall effects and the extent to which conflict and environmental changes have affected the community at large and specifically gender roles and relations in various aspects of men's and women's lives.



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2.1 Conflict in Eastern Sudan: An Overview

The first reported conflict in eastern Sudan was in 1933, between the Hadendoa and Rashayda tribes. The conflict was triggered by competition over resources and was resolved by the tribal leaders through the signing of an agreement on rights of use of land and other local resources. With the beginning of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1961, massive numbers of asylum seekers and refugees from border tribes started to enter the eastern Sudan region, resulting in demographic changes.

The mid 1980s witnessed massive movements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Nuba Mountains as they fled local conflicts and famine. The latter, which extended from 1984 to 1985, were an outcome of the prolonged drought and desertification that hit the Sahel from West Africa to Ethiopia. Even though their integration into the community in Kassala enriched the ethnic diversity, it also triggered an ethnic, cultural, and identity-based agenda that emerged after more than three decades in the absence of effective social and political structures that could effectively manage cultural diversity.

During the early 1990s, fundamental changes were imposed by the 1989 regime. These included granting certain groups of refugees and asylum seekers Sudanese nationality as well as favoring religious groups (jihadi militias) in the refugee camps near the Sudan-Eritrea border (Creative Associates International, 1996). Consequently, Eritrea provided support to the Sudanese opposition. The Beja Congress hosted meetings with the Sudanese opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which emerged in October 1989 as a coalition of the northern political parties opposed to the 1989 regime. In June 1995, the NDA signed an agreement in Asmara, together with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Until that time, the eastern Sudan region had not been viewed as one of the main conflict zones of Sudan.

The signing of the agreement led to the start of the eastern military front in 1997, followed by the occupation of Hameshkoreib province by the NDA and SPLA between March 1999 and November 2000, and the attack on Kassala town in November 2000.

In October 2006, the East Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) was signed in Asmara, which contributed to ending the armed conflict in the region. However, it failed to meet all the demands of the Beja people, especially the provision of essential basic services and meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes. The agreement itself was flawed, given its lack of emphasis

on the restructuring of power relations and access to wealth in the region. Limited positions were allotted to the Eastern Front (EF) leadership at the federal level, which was described as weak and divided, serving to stabilize the political scene without offering EF leaders a platform to promote the principles of their movements. The failure of the agreement to ensure the provision of minimum basic services, such as clean drinking water, health, and education, which were still out of reach for the majority of the population, was attributed to factors including the dominance of the NCP and the government in decision-making within the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (ESRDF), as well as the lack of transparency and accountability, and mismanagement of the ESRDF (Sudan Democracy First, 2016)

On October 3, 2020, Sudan's Transitional Government and representatives of several armed groups signed the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan. East Sudan was represented in the Juba peace negotiation and agreement through the Beja Congress opposition party led by Osama Said and the People's United Front for Liberation and Justice, whose vice president Khalid Idris signed the agreement.

However, the High Council of Beja Nazirs and Independent Chieftains led by the Hadendoa rejected the accord on the East Sudan Track, as they were excluded from the development and drafting process. Hadendoa leaders rejected the proposed accord on grounds of underrepresentation, as the delegation members were of Beni Amer ethnicity. As an immediate response, the High Council of Beja Nazirs organized the Peace, Development and Justice Conference in Sinkat in Red Sea state, under the slogan "Establishing Historical Rights." The meeting was attended by a large number of eastern Sudanese nazirs (native administration leaders), social and political leaders, and scholars. The main outcome of the conference was a call for the unification of all three eastern states into one region, as well as for the formation of a high coordination body composed



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of all eastern communities that was to agree, without external interference, on power-sharing arrangements and demands for self-determination.

2.2. Understanding the Linkages between Gender, Environment, and Conflict in Eastern Sudan

While environmental degradation and the eruption of conflict affect local communities at large, not everyone is affected equally. Conflicts intensify various forms of violence against women and girls, including forced marriage, physical violence, and sexual assault. Moreover, as women constitute the majority of the rural population and are at the heart of agriculture- and livestock-related activities, environmental changes in their immediate surroundings directly affect their social and economic status, limiting their opportunities and their access to education, productive livelihoods, and health services.

Environmental shocks fuel conflict and exacerbate pre-existing and underlying tensions between local groups, while putting pressure on already-stressed natural resources and increasing food and livelihood insecurity. In turn, natural resource-related conflict, instability, forced displacement and abuse of corporate power contribute to environmental degradation and increase the vulnerability of communities to environmental degradation shocks. Figure 1 illustrates the interplay and linkages between climate change, gender, and conflict, capturing the negative feedback loop between climate change and conflict.

This interplay often results in changes in the roles of men and women. Traditionally, men hold productive roles in Sudan while women primarily occupy the realm of the reproductive and domestic work force, including voluntary community involvement. This requires women to be active supporters in all domestic responsibilities while remaining relatively passive in terms of their community participation. Men commonly monopolize the decision-making power in private and public communal affairs, while women are left out.

However, these gender dynamics are shifting due to the impact of environmental shocks and conflict eruptions. As more men migrate to urban areas in search of new sources of income and economic security for their families, the sustained absence of men generates additional struggles for women, as more become heads of households. This is especially difficult since the conservative nature of the communities in East Sudan grants them access and rights to land ownership, obtaining credit,

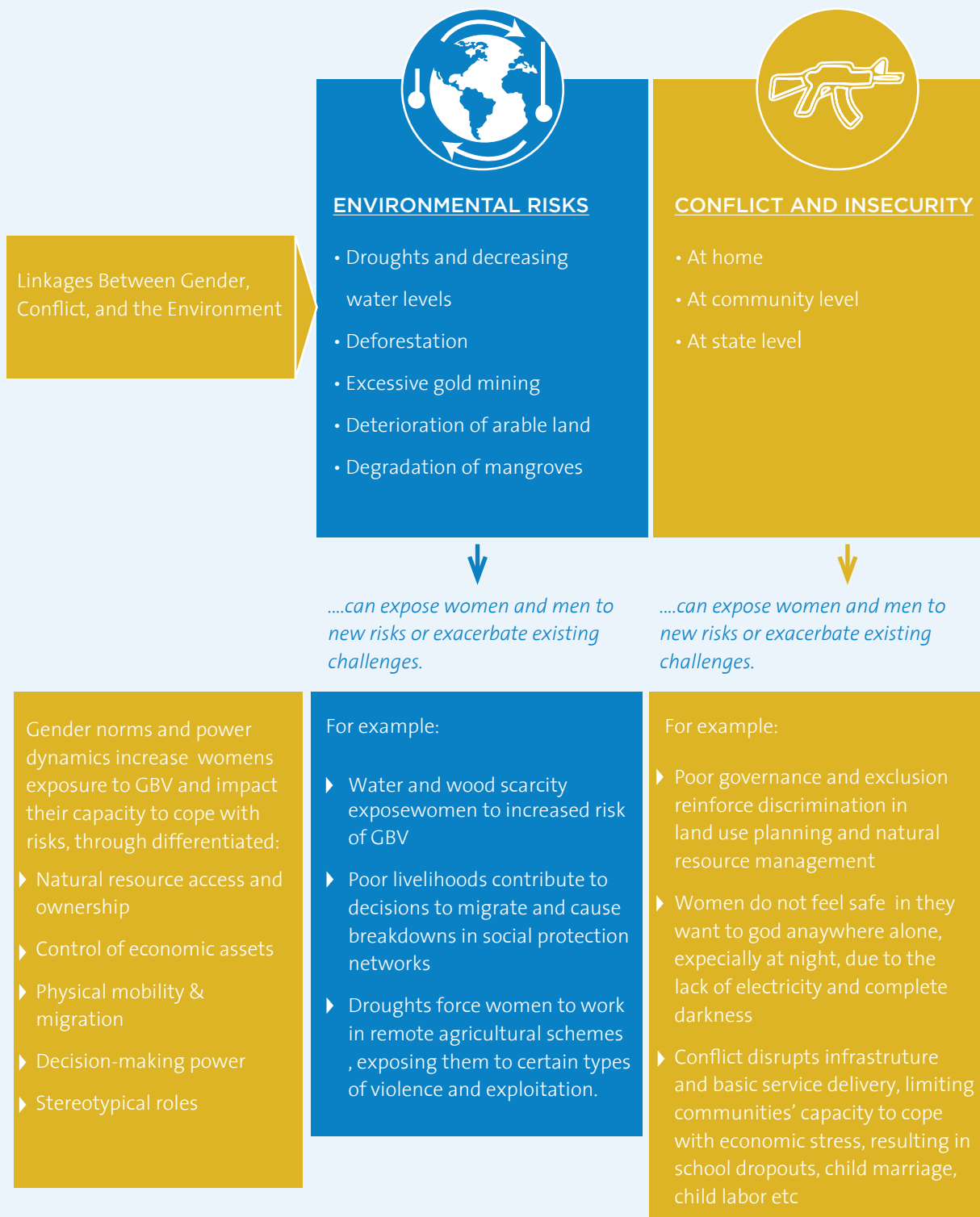
and social capital in their communities only through a male relative.

Moreover, women engaged in small-scale income-generating activities such as animal husbandry, the production of handcrafts and processing of food substances such as oil and butter, who are sometimes the sole heads of households, are heavily affected by conflict. Many suffer displacement and human rights violations, which are becoming persistent barriers to women's advancement in the region. Displacement due to conflict or loss of agricultural land, and limited access to resources, coupled with the high level of illiteracy, early marriage practices, and lack of training, limit their access to jobs and employability.

The meeting was attended by a large number of eastern Sudanese nazirs (native administration leaders), social and political leaders, and scholars.



FIGURE1
Linkages Between Climate Change, Gender, and Conflict



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The lack of land rights for women and underlying gender inequality have exacerbated the effects of climate change on women and girls. Many participants emphasized the centrality of gender norms, social roles and expectations on women and girls, focusing on the differential gender expectations within the household and the community in rural settings. This can include expectations on women and girls to obtain firewood and water. This means that they are often left out of consultations and are often excluded or left behind in the solutions proposed.

Women and men are affected differently by conflict and insecurity. While men are typically directly engaged in disputes, women bear the responsibility for the survival of the family during and after conflict. Their workload increases in crisis situations, while their income-generating opportunities decrease simultaneously due to insecurity. Familial obligations may bind women to a particular geographical location and limit their opportunities to migrate or seek labor opportunities elsewhere. However, a unique situation can be seen in Red Sea state where, due to the exclusive ethnic geographical distribution of the state, women and children migrate from urban towns to their respective tribal bases in rural areas for safety during conflicts.

Also, as a result of the economic pressures women experience, they are forced to go out and work in large and remote agricultural schemes, which may lead to their exposure to many risks such as violence and other forms of abuse or exploitation. In addition, their children may be deprived of education, because it is the custom of women in this locality to take their children with them if they go to work in large projects, as in the case of Gala El Nahal locality.

Climate change and environmental degradation have profoundly affected women and girls' safety, as threats to women's safety are made worse by increased scarcity of natural resources. As a result of gendered divisions of labor and low income, rural women are often responsible for collecting water, procuring and producing food, and sourcing fuel for heating and cooking from local forests. However, depleting resources mean that women and girls have to travel farther to collect water and essential resources, increasing burdens on their time, health, and safety, including greater exposure to assault.

This risk was faced by a significant fraction of the respondents, for example, in striving to provide fuel sources for the home. The majority of respondents from Red Sea and Al-Gadarif states relied on coal or firewood,

60% and 41% respectively. According to the respondents from Red Sea and Al-Gadarif, coal and firewood were usually collected and prepared by family members, primarily women and boys. Only 33% of respondents in Al-Gadarif and 16% of those from Red Sea state reported purchasing coal for their home use. Furthermore, 58% of the respondents reported walking a distance of up to 4 kilometers to fetch their supply of firewood. These trips were typically made on a weekly basis or according to the needs of the household.

Participants described high levels of food insecurity due to water scarcity and economic burdens, which in turn resulted in higher prevalence of malnutrition among women and children. Focus group discussion participants from the village of Ageig noted that, due to water shortages, community members were unable to plant vegetables for their daily consumption, while those from Aryab in Red Sea and Salmeen in Al-Gadarif reported similar shortages due to toxicity of the land and water as a consequence of mining practices. This shows how climate change as a risk multiplier affects multiple human rights, including the right to education and reproductive rights.

Despite the clearly differential and disproportionate impact that climate and environmental insecurity has on women and girls' lives, many participants reported that environmental protection programs did not focus on women. Local experts explained that, while climate change had a clear impact on women and girls' lives, there was a lack of segregated data to capture this reality. It is therefore important to ensure that gender dimensions are integrated into environmental data collection.

Another issue that emerged from the data was the high impact of land-grabbing practices in East Sudan. The activities of large corporations have led to the displacement of local communities, as in the case of the Setit Dam in Kassala, or the pollution of water reserves. Participants also noted direct repercussions including the exploitation of the local community, who worked long hours, underpaid and unprotected. They also cited indirect disadvantages such as the high prices of goods in the local markets. Miners in Aryab stated that they were forced to buy food and other items in large quantities and accept any price to meet their needs, as they typically mined in remote areas. Consequently, prices continuously increased, challenging the purchasing power of other citizens.



A local lawyer and activist emphasized the need to ensure that local communities had access to education about land rights, compensation, and lobbying skills. There is a need to train in different languages and to identify diverse community leaders. Separate capacity-building activities for women and girls in the communities are crucial to explain the differences in their legal rights in light of gendered social norms.

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was the issue of migration of refugees from neighboring countries. Participants drew attention to how these population movements could also lead to tensions with local communities, particularly where local communities felt that refugee camps had greater access to natural resources such as water. Participants felt that there was a lack of focus on gender within this context and that refugee women and girls were given limited opportunities to participate in environmental governance, and that water points constructed to bring host and refugee communities together have often caused a rise in tensions over water ownership and access. This was primarily seen in Al-Gadarif, in all three of the localities focused on in the study; in Eastern Galabat conflicts continue to recur over forest cutting by refugees to construct camps, and access to water. This recently escalated in 2022, as the main water tank in the area was linked to the local Um Rakoba camp, stranding the local community. It was also seen in Gala Alnahal.

2.3 Gender and Conflict

2.3.1 Root Causes and Triggers of Conflict in Eastern Sudan

Following the ousting of the previous government in 2019, the implications of decades of dictatorship, marginalization in development, ethnic discrimination, and competition over natural resources re-ignited cyclic eruptions of conflict in eastern Sudan. As a result, Al-Gadarif saw disputes over water sources, which turned into violent clashes between the two ethnic groups, killing at least seven in 2019. Meanwhile, tribal conflict in Red Sea state in 2019-2021 was described as the worst episode of violent clashes since the 1980s.

The impact of successive years of drought, historical injustices with regards to development and social services—particularly in rural areas and among nomadic communities, political and economic policy changes at the national level during the last three decades, and armed conflict (1994-2006) have all contributed to the creation of a highly vulnerable community and a declining resilience capacity to environmental and

socio-economic shocks, as well as large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) moving from rural areas into urban areas, especially the state capitals. Given the poor technical skills of the migrants, which do not meet the urban market demand, the limited job opportunities, and the difficulties of home return due to continuing environmental degradation or conflicts, population movements have increased unemployment and poverty rates in towns, put more pressure on the already dwindling social service institutions and negatively influenced the morphology of towns.

The drought and the armed conflicts in neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea and the civil war in other parts of Sudan have resulted in the influx of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons into the region. The region does not lack pull factors: horticultural land in Kassala and the El Gash agricultural scheme in Kassala, large-scale, mechanized farming in Al-Gadarif, and the seaports in Red Sea are attractive factors for migrants. East Sudan is one of the poorest areas in the country, where poverty rates range from 65% in Red Sea, and 85% in Kassala, to 88% in Al-Gadarif state (United Nations, 2017). The high level of poverty is attributed largely to the combination of the high illiteracy rate, successive droughts, natural disasters, conflicts, and gender inequality. Women are affected by poverty and social marginalization more than men due to traditions, social and cultural barriers imposed on them by the community, and unfavorable economic factors. Particular examples include rural and pastoral women who have little access to education, health services, employment, or income

Sudan's conflicts have many causes, but at the root of each conflict are questions over the control and distribution of resources (Ayoub, 2004). East Sudan is no exception. Competition over resources is considered a leading cause of conflict in east Sudan. The main groups competing over land and water are mainly farmers and pastoralists. In recent decades, pastoralism has been in decline in Al-Gadarif state because of threats posed by the rapid encroachment of mechanized rain-fed agriculture, human population growth and destruction of pastures, which shift extensive livestock production to areas that are of increasing marginal primary productivity (Suleiman, 2013).

In Kassala state, across the four northern localities of Rural Aroma, North Delta, Telkouk and Hamshkorieb, nomadic and pastoral groups follow seasonal movement routes across borders to Eritrean territories and



back to the Gash Delta basin during dry season. The conflict in the region, which began in 1996, has blocked these routes and increased competition over internal water resources situated near agricultural plots and it has been reported that these tensions are exacerbated during drought spells.

Another factor that has contributed to the resource-based conflict in Al-Gadarif is gold mining in the Elbutana area. According to the interviews, mining activities have destroyed pastureland in the Elbutana area, leading to the loss of some beneficial species, poisoning the water and causing livestock to fall into mine pits.

Until relatively recently, utilization of agro-fisheries resources was not a priority in Sudan, however, it has lately been experiencing growth. Aggressive competition over declining resources has exacerbated social differentiation and rejection of others. Economic disparities have also contributed to changes in existing demographics and patterns of trade, where new, fast-developing sectors have emerged, including smuggling of goods, human trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in small arms and drugs, and money laundering.

The development of irrigated and mechanized agriculture has led to new types of competition. In the Gash Delta, the Hadendoa are acknowledged as the original owners of the area and still hold the majority of the tenancies in the Gash scheme (65%), but they are in competition with West African sharecroppers (mainly Hausa and Borno) and with the Nile Riverain who hold gardens and tenancies. In Khasm al Girba (New Halfa) part of the former Shukriya land was given to resettled Nubians who had been displaced due to the construction of the High Dam in Egypt and to other pastoral groups. Along the Atbara and Setit Rivers, West African farmers and former pastoral groups like the Layawaying are in competition for riverbanks (*juruf*), etc.

The post-revolution era has witnessed many tribal conflicts in eastern Sudan, mostly around political agenda. These conflicts have been led by native administration and tribal alliances including the High Council of Beja Nazirs and Independent Chieftainships led by the Hadendoa Nazir and the Independent Coordinating Mechanism for the Chieftainships of the Bani Amer Tribes. Ethnic polarization, hate speech, and limited civic education, especially in rural areas, are among the other factors that continue to fuel the current tribal conflicts in the region.

The transitional government has acknowledged *Galad* as a conflict management practice. (*Galad* is a word of honor given by two conflicting parties that they will adhere to a time-sensitive, non-aggression pact arranged by mediators). Currently, this traditional mechanism is neither well known nor recognized by some of the actors involved in the current tribal disputes such as the Nuba. Moreover, *Galad* is generally used to deal with more or less limited-scale conflicts, in contrast to the complex issues underlying the current conflicts.

Indeed, according to Beja tradition, *Galad* is only an immediate truce between the conflicting parties and is considered as a step to be followed by other steps. These are:

- working to further reduce tensions, for example by visiting the injured or aggrieved party and offering presents and assistance (by mediators and representatives of the other party). This may require extending the term of the *Galad* if there is still tension between the parties.
- Directing the focus of both parties to the benefits of agreement rather than positions of principle. Mediators (*adii*) also concentrate on preparing alternatives to potential deadlocks.
- In all cases, there are protocols that need to be established in advance, including who should arrive first and where the parties should be seated. This avoids friction and enhances the chances of reaching an agreement. In addition, the meeting place is carefully considered ahead of time. The ideal meeting place could be located on the territory of one of the parties or in a neutral setting.

Results from the analysis show that 56%, 65% and 47% of all respondents in Al-Gadarif, Kassala and Red Sea, respectively, considered their state to be in “a state of conflict and insecurity.” The root causes of conflict in region have been attributed to *political factors*: conflicts along borders, administrative and political aspirations of different groups; *cultural and socio-economic factors*:

The drought and the armed conflicts in neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea and the civil war in other parts of Sudan have resulted in the influx of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons into the region.

poverty and poor service provision, as well as *racism and tribal biases*: unequal sharing of power and wealth, clashes of interest between nomads and settlers, and competition over natural resources such as land or water. Other causes include tribalism, minimal party affiliations, poor governance, division of localities on a political or tribal basis, unequal development, and the inability to manage diversity.

In Al-Gadarif, conflict occurs due to competition over natural resources, agricultural land, pastures, and water sources. It takes place between herders and farmers in the agricultural schemes as a result of the degradation of animal routes, loss of pastoral areas, and the lack of designated water sources for animals, forcing herders to enter agricultural lands, local forests, or protected areas with their livestock. On a smaller scale, disputes also occur within these groups, especially between small and large farmers challenging each other over land ownership, as well as between pastoralists as a result of livestock theft. Conflicts also occur between indigenous groups and corporations with mass mechanized agricultural projects which take over large swathes of land and are able to siphon water from local sources, disadvantaging smaller landowners. Other factors leading to conflict include the lack of sustainable development. For instance, in El Sad City, farmers and government representatives have been in a state of dispute due to delays in compensation of farmers for agricultural lands loss during local dam construction, and the subsequent unequal distribution of housing in the city.

Conflict in Kassala is considered to be driven by political competition between tribes powered by conflict of interests, political illiteracy, and extreme poverty. Participants explained that *“the conflict in the state is of a purely political nature”*, emphasizing that it was a direct reflection of political polarization at the center of the country and tribal competition in the region. To an extent, participants stated that Kassala state was still managed by members of the previous regime, who capitalized on high levels of illiteracy and existing ethnic divisions, promoting negative perceptions and mistrust. Additionally, water was cited as a key factor in resource-based conflicts and traditional tensions between small farmers and herders in the state, especially during the dry season, when water aquifers start to dry up. Herders tend to move towards riverbanks and settlements to secure safe water for their livestock, and such movements across agricultural areas in the absence of established animal routes cause extensive damage to the farm areas, igniting disputes between the two groups.



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At a larger level, throughout all three states, participants expressed that *“the continued exploitation of the region’s resources by the federal government is a primary precursor fueling an independence agenda even among opposing groups in the east.”*

In Red Sea, friction between political parties over power and wealth has now emerged as a main driver of conflict in the state. Respondents explained that previous governments enforced a tribal mentality. *“I mean, in the case of my tribe and my mayor, people pledge allegiance to him. I am with him regardless of my education or status. Whatever he orders we all follow”* -KII, Port Sudan. The belief that you are only as strong as your tribe has been enforced into community members until it has become perceived as a fact by the respondents. The unequal distribution of power and wealth between the different tribes has caused a persistent state of dispute and competition between the different tribes, extending beyond the geographic borders of a single state to their settlements throughout the eastern region of Sudan. Participants cited an example in 2012, between Beni Amer and Rashayda who had begun artisanal gold mining in South Tokar, Beja territory. The intervention of elders from both tribes calmed the situation, but tensions remain and could easily escalate if security deteriorates in the region.

These fractures are further exacerbated by negative stereotypes and perceptions between tribes, particularly between the Beja and Beni Amer tribes. Despite being considered a rich region, with Port Sudan being the gateway to most foreign trade (including oil), and large-scale, irrigated agricultural schemes in Al-Gadarif and Kassala, trade and farming revenues have not benefited the region’s majority of herders and subsistence farmers. The interplaying impact of environmental changes, recurrent droughts, and famine has decimated rural livelihoods, further increasing their already high poverty levels. Members of resistance committees in these states emphasized that, historically, the centralized government, with a near monopoly on the collection and redistribution of revenues, *“has returned only meagre allocations for education, health, and other services to us.”* However, due to recent political instability in the country, these have not been maintained.



Participants added “previously Port Sudan used to get to keep a percentage of the revenues from the port for its people. But now the transitional government keeps all of it, you can already see the impact that has had on us ... our schools, our roads ... we can’t even afford to keep our electricity running all the time.”

On the political front, there have been several government interventions aimed at addressing conflict in the east, such as the ESPA signed in 2006 with the Eastern Sudan rebels. These generally fail to create real change due to mismanagement of funds, embezzlement, and biases in implementation. However, the Constitutional Declaration signed by the Transitional Military Council (TMC), Sudan’s de facto rulers after the revolution, has committed to achieving women’s empowerment and securing peace in the country.

Initial actions have included the signature of a pre-negotiation declaration of principles between the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGS) and various opposition groups gathered under the umbrella of the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). A joint declaration with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army-North Sudan Faction (SPLM/A-N) was also signed as they are not part of the SRF. As the negotiations began, they did not follow the typical track system that is frequently used in modern peace-making processes but were broken down into tracks representing the regional entities: Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, Central Sudan, Northern Sudan, and Eastern Sudan.

Some groups protested the track system itself, but there was also skepticism towards the negotiations between the STG and non-armed groups. Hence, participants considered the “East Sudan track a direct contributor to the acceleration of the conflict in the region, a tool smartly used by the center to cause divisions in the east.”

At a larger scale, participants agreed that the Juba peace agreement was not comprehensive, and the eastern region of Sudan was only marginally represented. Activists in Kassala added that “later amendments to the protocol, including East Sudan track, have only contributed to increasing tension and conflict” as can be seen in the recurrent road and port blockages in Red Sea. Unfortunately, without prompt action, the conflict in the region is only expected to escalate, leading to further inter-tribal fragmentation.

“Our problems are deeply rooted. We have poverty, discrimination against women, hunger, and severe drought; those are all potential reasons for sustained conflict,” FGD.

“The lack of representation in the eastern track has had dire consequences. So now even though the eastern track has been discarded, the process has already contributed to worsening the situation on the ground,” KII.

Moreover, as only political parties belonging to the SRF were allowed to join the Juba discussions, some political parties and civil society groups were shut out from the negotiations in a region in which the most active leaders do not belong to political parties. Our participants stated that this caused substandard results, as political parties were viewed as weak and inefficient due to years of political repression by the previous government. “For us (women-led CSOs) Al-Bashir’s people always worked extra hard to make our work extra difficult. In some cases, they even cancelled our registration” KII informant, Port Sudan. This poses issues in terms of representation. In 2020, Port Sudan witnessed recurrent port closures by port workers protesting against a peace deal between Khartoum and rebels, citing it as unrepresentative of the local population in east Sudan. The Juba negotiations brought to the forefront the fragile situation in eastern Sudan. The TGS pushed for a consultative conference to resolve disagreements, but attempts to gather the different stakeholder groups failed. While representatives from Kassala and Al-Gadarif attended, the conference was boycotted by Red Sea state.

Moreover, participants stated that they considered conflict in Red Sea to be far more dangerous than in other states, clarifying that, in recent years, different tribes, primarily the Biga and Beni Amer, had engaged in an arms race. And as a result, in recent disputes, firearms and grenades had been used, as was the case with the explosion in Port Sudan in August 2021. Although in this particular case fatalities were limited, it is a cause for concern if there is a larger scale dispute.

2.3.2 Gender Implications of conflict

During conflict, the breakdown of social networks and coexistence between ethnic groups exposes women to assaults in public settings such as small markets, bakeries, and supermarkets. Consequently, in Kassala state, “during conflict women from conflicting tribes are



no longer able to visit each other. This kind of behavior can also be seen in the schools.” These conditions are further exacerbated by the general lack of security resulting in petty crimes, looting and thefts. The social implications include the loss of the heads of some families due to displacement, school dropouts, deterioration of resources and local infrastructure, destruction of social relations, the spread of regionalism and racism, and the spread of hate speech among certain segments of society.

Women in eastern Sudan face many obstacles in their daily lives. In these conservative societies, very few women have the opportunity to seek an education and become politically active. Conflict further worsens the situation of women and girl, as it intensifies their isolation and limited access to resources and opportunities. This is manifested through further restricted mobility, depriving them of access to marketplaces, health facilities, training, and education opportunities. These limitations on mobility are particularly harmful for women in the informal sector, and market lockdowns during conflict periods cause female sellers to lose customers.

In Kassala, participants stated that *“many women have lost their business capital during the lockdown of the marketplaces.”* Other participants also added that *“tribal polarization has resulted in the loss of a fraction of the customer base.”* This results in opportunity loss.

On the subject of violence against women, only 16% of the respondents reported such incidents, the majority of whom were in Al-Gadarif (41%). The main forms reported included physical violence by their spouse, which affected 39% in Al-Gadarif state, followed by 36% in Red Sea and 15% in Kassala, as well as emotional abuse observed among 84% of participants in Kassala, followed by 68% in Red Sea and 46% in Al-Gadarif.

Conflict also had marked impacts on the local infrastructure in eastern Sudan, including limited access to water sources, reported by 22% of the respondents, limited access to the health care system due to closures of centers, and roadblocks. An added dimension reported by participants from Red Sea, particularly Port Sudan, was that during conflict, access to health care facilities was restricted by tribal affiliation. Other reported repercussions of conflict included loss of life, as approximately 20% of all respondents reported the death of one or more family member or relative during a conflict. Figures in Al-Gadarif and Red Sea were respectively 33% and 31%.

With regard to other repercussions, such as the effect on the distribution of utilities such as gas services, and

price hikes, 100% of the women in Al-Gadarif state were affected but none were affected in Kassala or Red Sea states. According to the survey results, the most common implications of conflict were as follows (Table 2).

Women in Eastern Sudan face many obstacles in their daily lives. In these conservative societies, very few women have the opportunity to seek an education and become politically active.



TABLE 2
The Impacts of Conflict

| Impacts | States% | | | Overall |
|---|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Al-Gadarif | Kassala | Red Sea | |
| PHYSICAL ILLNESS | 21.4 | 9.2 | 36.2 | 20.8 |
| SEXUAL VIOLENCE | 41.1 | 3.1 | 23.4 | 16.5 |
| PHYSICAL VIOLENCE | 39.3 | 15.4 | 36.2 | 29.2 |
| EFFECTS ON EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUCH AS STRESS AND ANXIETY | 46.4 | 84.6 | 68.1 | 67.3 |
| DEATH OF ONE OR MORE FAMILY MEMBER OR RELATIVE | 33.9 | - | 31.9 | 20.2 |
| CHILDREN'S EDUCATION HAS BEEN SUSPENDED OR CURTAILED | 39.3 | 29.2 | 48.9 | 38.1 |
| ECONOMIC IMPACT | 33.9 | 86.2 | 40.4 | 56.0 |
| MIGRATION TO ANOTHER COUNTRY OUTSIDE SUDAN | 37.5 | 3.1 | 40.4 | 25.0 |
| DISPLACEMENT TO A DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL AREA INSIDE SUDAN | 32.1 | 24.6 | 34.0 | 29.8 |
| DANGER TO WATER SOURCES | 28.6 | 12.3 | 27.7 | 22.0 |
| DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND SERVICES | 41.1 | 44.6 | 51.1 | 45.2 |
| LONGER WAITING TIMES TO OBTAIN MEDICAL CARE | 48.2 | 41.5 | 29.8 | 40.5 |
| INABILITY TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION | 50.0 | 69.2 | 59.6 | 60.1 |
| OTHER EFFECTS: IMPACT ON DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES | 100.0 | - | - | 100.0 |

2.4. Role of Women During Conflict and Peace-Building Activities

Although in both Al-Gadarif and Red Sea states there were minimal reports of women-led action at the community level to end recent incidents, participants stated that women played a large role in supporting other women and families, especially if displaced, through the provision of basic food items or cash.

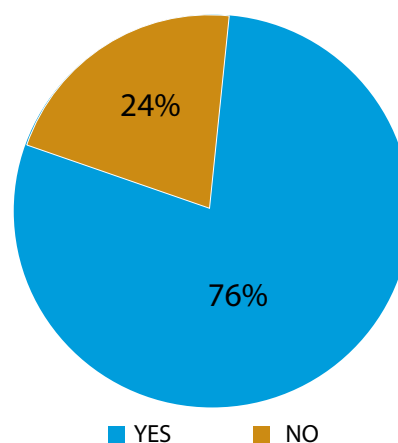
In Kassala, women from the Beja tribes were reported to play critical roles in conflict resolution through a practice known as *Seilif*, in which women would end an ongoing dispute by marching into the fight and uncovering their heads.

This simple action usually prompts the male participants to end the fight and hold a public hearing (*or Galad*) to discuss the terms for a truce. However, this powerful practice is no longer commonly implemented as recent disputes have been more dangerous due to the use of firearms.



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FIGURE 2
Participation in Conflict Resolution



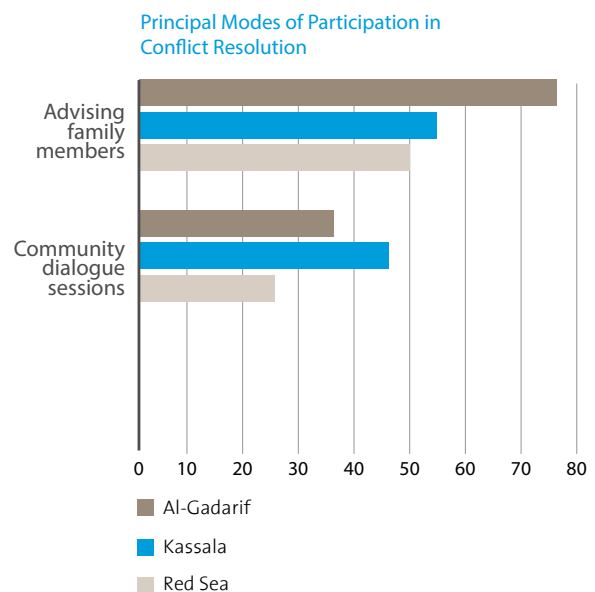
Regarding their modes of participation (Table 3), women in eastern Sudan participated in conflict resolution to some extent through a variety of means: 58% of the respondents participated in reconciliation between the conflicting parties by providing advice and guidance, 35% participated through dialogue sessions with the conflicting parties and raised their awareness about peaceful coexistence, while the other modes of participation, which included using methods of containment and discussion to identify the roots of the conflict and address the problem, bridging the points of view between the conflicting parties, and providing humanitarian aid to the conflicting parties, represented 2% each.

TABLE 3
Modes of Participation in Conflict Resolution

| | |
|---|----|
| Containment and discussion to identify the roots of the conflict and address the problem | 2 |
| Dialogue sessions with the conflicting parties and raising their awareness about peaceful coexistence | 35 |
| Reconciliation between the conflicting parties using advice and guidance | 58 |
| An attempt to bridge the points of view between the conflicting parties | 2 |
| Provision of humanitarian aid to the conflicted parties | 2 |

The most commonly used tools in conflict resolution in the different states included reconciliation between the conflicting parties using advice and guidance, cited by 75%, 57% and 50% in Red Sea state, Al-Gadarif and Kassala, respectively. This was followed by the method of participating in dialogue sessions with the conflicting parties and raising their awareness about peaceful coexistence, with respective percentages of 41%, 35% and 25% in Kassala, Al-Gadarif and Red Sea states, respectively.

FIGURE 3
Principal Modes of Participation in Conflict Resolution



Women believed that *“through dialogue and influencing their family members by raising awareness, they can actively help stop the fighting.”* However, the participants explained that the extent of their influence over family members and their immediate community was highly dependent on the size of the dispute, explaining that women had more power in small problems between neighbors and small quarrels within the community. However, according to the respondents, larger issues and disputes “can’t be solved by women’s efforts.”

It is worth noting that in both Kassala and Red Sea state, participants stated that women could also have a role in escalating conflicts through instigating and inciting their male counterparts to engage in conflict or encouraging youth to loot and damage public property. A participant explained that this was most commonly done by women who experienced loss during an ongoing dispute or a previous conflict.

“It is very important that we not forget to seek justice for those who have been wronged during a dispute, not only stop it ... those negative feelings of injustice can be very powerful in fueling men’s anger.”

At a political level, the participants considered the small role of women in peacebuilding activities to be a reflection of the overall standing allocated to women by the government. Civil activists stated that, despite the undertakings laid out by the Constitutional Declaration, *“women continued to be left out from key representative groups such as the Beja Opposition Congress which attended the Juba agreement at the Beja Club in Port Sudan. If we are not there, how can we possibly fight to uphold our basic rights?”* KII, Red Sea. Cultural and sports clubs, where community dialogues and debates take place, are male-dominated arenas, so again women are discouraged from participating. In Al-Gadarif, a few women activists were invited to attend a presentation on the vision of the people of Al-Gadarif in a consultative conference held in Khartoum, but they did not take part in Juba.

Although Sudanese women are gaining ground in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, they continue to face barriers to meaningful engagement in governance mechanisms, including those that address natural resource disputes. Community-level structures such as the native administrations—a network of local community leaders trusted to address and resolve

conflicts—exclude women entirely. A major barrier to women’s engagement in peacebuilding efforts is their lack of training and awareness regarding key international agreements such as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. The survey results show that only 16% of the respondents in eastern Sudan had heard of the resolution from previous training and experiences with local CSOs, while 60% were not familiar with it. The remaining were not sure. By state, 23% of women respondents from Al-Gadarif were familiar with the resolution, while in Kassala and Red Sea, respectively, only 17% and 9% had heard of it.



3 GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT

Sudan is facing a wide range of environmental, social, and natural resource challenges such as deforestation, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and habitat, and pollution of air, land, and water. The persistence of these factors has led to the eruption of conflicts over scarce natural resources, food insecurity and poor waste and sanitation services in urban and rural areas, ultimately hindering Sudan's sustainable development.

Human beings contribute significantly to pollution and environmental imbalances by contaminating food with pesticides and fertilizers, polluting water and air, developing biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, and increasing emissions of gases that lead to global warming. Thus, attention to environmental balance has become a matter of urgency that requires action on the part of all individual actors, Governments, institutions, international bodies and organisations, and civil society organisations, in addition to the identification of responsibilities and the allocation of tasks.

Stockholm Conference:

The United Nations Human Environment Summit was held in 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden. Its motto was "Only One Earth." At the outcome of the conference, the most significant causes of environmental imbalances were identified, including population growth, obscene exploitation of human beings and the environment, destruction of resources, increased pollution, and growing food needs, as well as problems of waste, desertification, climate disruption and global warming.

In addition to addressing issues associated with nuclear arms and the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, the conference resulted in the first unified program specializing in environmental issues. The most important outcome of the conference was the creation of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), whose objectives were to preserve and develop the environment. On December 15, 1972, the United Nations General Assembly designated June 5 as World Environment Day, marking the first day of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. The UN General Assembly also adopted the creation of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

The Stockholm Conference was preceded by several international environmental conventions

Earth Summit:

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, twenty years after the Stockholm Conference. This Conference was of particular importance. For the first time, sustainable development was included in international conventions, and one of the major results of the Conference was Agenda 21, a program of action designed to address the following environmental issues: water pollution – desertification and drought – drinking water – conservation of biological diversity – climate change – population growth – energy issues. In addition to the foregoing, the Earth Summit produced many important conventions in the field of the environment.



TABLE 4

International and Regional Environmental Conventions to which Sudan is a Signatory

| Name of the Convention | Ratification Date |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State | 1935 |
| International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) | 1971 |
| Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water | signed in 1963 |
| Agreement for the Establishment of a Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East | ratified in 1967 |
| African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources | joined in 1983 |
| Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat | signed in 1971, joined in 2005 |
| Convention for the Establishment of the Desert Locust Control Organisation for Eastern Africa | ratified in 1968 |
| Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage | signed in 1972, ratified in 1974 |
| Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) | ratified in 1982 |
| Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals | Sudan is a participating non-party |
| United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea | signed in 1982, ratified in 1985 |
| Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment | joined in 1985 |
| Protocol Concerning Regional Cooperation in Combating Pollution by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency | membership in 1985 |
| Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer | membership in 1993 |
| Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident | signed in 1986 |
| Montréal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer | ratified in 1993 |
| Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal | membership in 2006 |
| Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of the Trans-boundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa | signed in 1991, ratified in 1993 |
| Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) | member country |
| United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) | signed in 1992, ratified in 1993 |
| Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) | signed in 1992, ratified in 1995 |
| United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa | signed in 1994, ratified in 1995 |
| Kyoto Protocol | ratified in 2004 |
| Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade | ratified in 2005 |
| Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity | accession in 2005 |
| Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) | ratified in 2006 |
| Minamata Convention on Mercury | signed in 2014 |



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FIGURE 4
Drought and Desertification in Red Sea State



This image taken in the village of Ageig in Red Sea shows the impact of drought on the land.

Environmental degradation of any magnitude not only negatively affects development and ecosystem integrity, but also forms a major threat to security. Extreme climate events such as floods, droughts, desertification, and sea-level rise are likely to force increasing numbers of people to migrate from rural to urban areas, away from increasingly arid areas and low-lying coastal areas, often outside the region. The resulting massive migrations could spark violent conflicts for access to and control of key resources such as land and water within the country. In light of what the country has been experiencing, this will impose increased hardships on the population groups usually left behind, i.e., women, children, and the elderly. The impact would be particularly harsh for women and girls (Dione, J, 2008).

Gender roles and responsibilities vary greatly within and between states and communities in eastern Sudan. This variation is attributed to many factors including tribal affiliation, proximity to towns, local culture (prevailing traditions and customs), and level of access to resources, particularly land. Accordingly, each state has been addressed separately, and comparisons are provided in the analysis and conclusion sections.

Among the Beja communities of eastern Sudan, women's main domain of work is the reproductive role, with the exception of handicraft tasks such as mat making. The raw materials used for making mats are however, provided by men through safe cutting. Men are also responsible for selling women's production, such as

mats, in the market. This activity in particular is diminishing due to the continuous removal of trees.

Water fetching is predominantly undertaken by women and girls in rural areas in all three states. However, in Beja communities, men and boys are responsible for fetching water, rather than women and girls. This is mainly attributed to the restriction on women's movements. Under circumstances where men are absent from a family, women are permitted to go to water sources and stand at a certain distance from the water source while the men and boys around the source are supposed to bring water to them where they stand.

FIGURE 5
Local Women's Production

This image depicts an example of hand-made items produced by women in East Sudan as part of the activities of a local women's association.



In contrast, in Wadeheko locality, women were reported to have more active roles in agricultural production, including seeding and harvesting, where they engaged in causal labor.

However, the study revealed that these roles were exclusively associated with West African women, who had different cultural norms. Al-Gadarif State is an agricultural state and is one of the main contributors of food grains in the country.

The state is inhabited by a mix of tribes from all over Sudan and from neighboring countries, who migrated as seasonal laborers. Such diversity has influenced the socially prescribed gender roles for women and men to an extent that makes it difficult to generalize. However, mechanized farming, which has put more pressure on small producers, including women, has really hindered women's access to forest products, as it entails use of more inputs and machines which are not affordable to women.

Climate change affects women and men differently. Women and girls face particular vulnerabilities resulting from cultural norms and their lower socioeconomic status in society. Women's domestic roles often make them disproportionate users of natural resources such as water, firewood, and forest products.

According to survey participants, environmental risks in the eastern Sudan region can be categorized into issues pertaining to climate change and human-made impacts on the environment.

Human-made impacts:

1. These notably include deforestation through excessive cutting of forests to expand agricultural land. In the case of Al-Gadarif, this was done to create settlements for refugees from Eritrea and neighboring countries. Similar practices were reported in Red Sea state due to excessive cutting of trees to make charcoal as an income-generating activity and for home use due to recurrent gas shortages.

In 2010, Sudan had 72.6 kha of tree cover, extending over 0.039% of its land area. In 2021, it lost 50.3 ha of tree cover, equivalent to 14.8kt of CO₂ emissions (Global Forest Watch, 2022). According to the same sources, between 2001 and 2012, Red Sea state experienced 100% tree cover loss.

In Sudan, mechanized farming is also known to be a key driver of forest and grassland conversion. Energy consumption ranks second among the causes of

deforestation and forest degradation, and biomass energy represents a main source of energy, especially in rural Sudan, meeting approximately 60% of the national energy demand (Forest National Corporation, 2018).

Currently, around 66% of all mechanized farming areas in the country (around 32 million feddan or 13.4 million hectares) are located in Al-Gadarif state (Egemi, 2008). The eastern region (Red Sea, Kassala and Al-Gadarif states) has been receiving refugees from the Horn of Africa since 1963, with a peak of around 1,000,000 refugees in the mid-1980s. Approximate average annual wood consumption per capita at the time was 0.73 m³, while total annual wood consumption was estimated at 730,000 m³ from deforesting approximately 10,000 ha of prime forest and woodlands. In 2013, East Sudan hosted approximately 88,745 refugees living in camps and urban areas (Forest National Corporation, 2018). The country's population concentration has contributed to the horizontal expansion of cities at the expense of agricultural areas and green belts that protect land against the danger of soil erosion and desertification.

2. Mining practices have become widespread due to their quick financial return to alleviate poverty, partly in response to the decline in foreign currency revenues. However, waste products from the use of mercury in gold production has led to the toxicity of the land, making it non-arable. Moreover, failure to fill in pits excavated for mining leads to the accumulation of water from heavy rains, preventing water from reaching agricultural land and changing the landscape. The use of mercury in gold extraction has negative effects on the environment and human health, causing a wide range of symptoms.

One study has suggested that as much as two to three tons of mercury are needed to extract a ton of gold; another estimated that eighty-three tons of mercury would be required to produce sixty-four tons of gold (Ibrahim, 2015). In addition to the problem of mercury remaining in and polluting mine tailings, vast tracts of land that would otherwise be used for farming are instead used for mining and degraded. Even though trade in mercury is banned by the Minamata Convention, the metal continues to be imported into Sudan (UNEP, 2017).

3. Moreover, mesquite trees planted as a protective belt against desertification have negatively affected



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water resources, as their roots reach sixty meters underground and this has contributed to reducing agricultural land as well as to the disappearance of other types of trees and plants known in the region, such as senna. Additionally, mesquite trees typically block the light from the plants below them.

4. Land grabbing practices by corporate bodies that invest in large, mechanized farms in rain-fed areas, drawing on natural water sources.

Case study:

Traditional Gold Mining and its Impact on Women in Haya Village, Red Sea State

This case study was conducted in Haya, a village approximately 209 km southwest of Port Sudan. Haya sits at the point where the railways and roads coming from Atbara and Kassala intersect en route to Suakin and Port Sudan. It is also a junction station on the mainline of the Sudan railway network. Due to the ethnic homogeneity of the village's population, it has no history of tribal conflict. Despite these factors, the area suffers from gross underdevelopment and poor socio-economic circumstances.

The participants reported a high prevalence of malnutrition among women and children due to poverty and limited access to farm produce. Their diet typically consisted of legumes, mainly lentils. However, as men typically spent their day in the mines and local market, they had access to meals with better nutritional values.

Men were typically responsible for fetching water from local wells and for income generation, while women had no economic responsibilities. Women in the area were considered of low regard in terms of participation in decision-making, due to their poor education and general illiteracy. Hence, there are currently no active associations in the area due to women's lack of interest in economic activities.

As an alternative to agriculture and other means of subsistence, people have turned to traditional mining practices to sustain their livelihood. However, as the tools they use are simple and primitive hammers and shovels, a disproportional amount of effort is exerted compared to the profits obtained. This is particularly true because the majority of miners lack the necessary equipment to extract gold from the ore. Additional barriers are

facial due to restrictions in the areas where traditional miners are allowed to dig, as the areas are controlled by major corporations. Participants explained that miners were rarely given protective gear, resulting in a high prevalence of chest diseases from exposure to dust and inhalation of toxins.

During the rainy season, the mines are filled with water which leaks into natural water sources, causing their contamination. Community members reported that some mines were toxic with acid waste which has resulted in higher incidence of diseases such as cancer; local health care providers stated that at least 3-5 people were diagnosed annually. The key environmental issue was the lack of water due to increasing temperatures and poor rainfall in the last few years. The recurrent droughts have led to the death of livestock, while the agricultural lands have become less fertile than before.

The infrastructure of the local water system is old and obsolete, causing recurrent spills onto local streets and destruction of WASH infrastructure. A small number of improved pit latrines exists, typically shared by multiple homes. It was also observed that people did not practice handwashing with soap as there were no handwashing facilities at the community level.

The impact of these factors is worsened by the inability of state institutions to supervise grazing and agricultural operations and implement effective environmental response plans, as well as the lack of environmental awareness among the population.

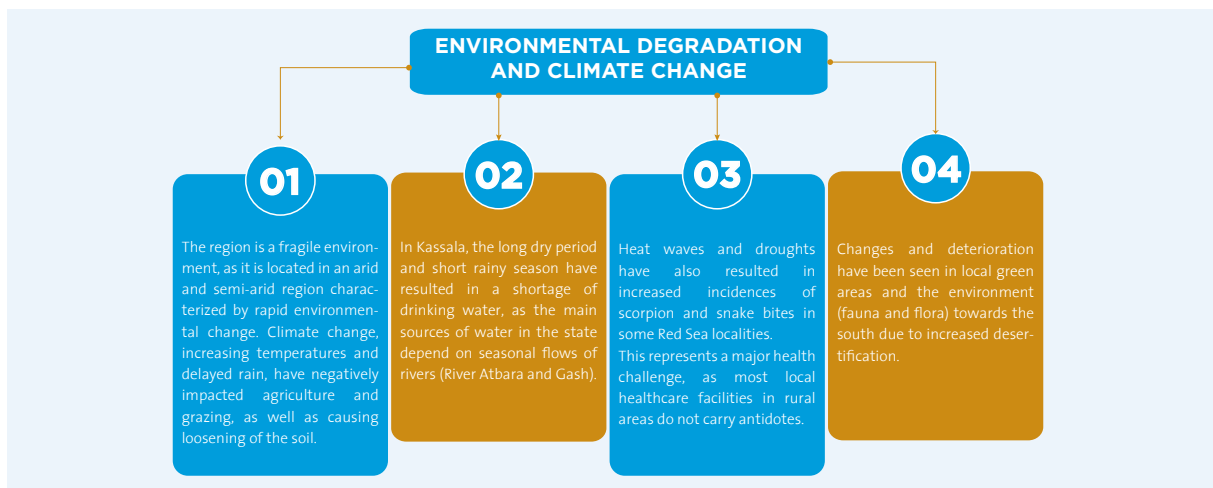
Sudan's high population growth will put more pressure on resources to meet the high demand for food, water, housing, and other services. A recurrent issue mentioned by participants was their concern about the water supply and the efficiency of drinking water plants. Use of old, decayed pipeline systems causes water pollution and contamination, requiring increased quantities of water purification materials like chlorine, which also contribute to corroding and damaging pipelines. The situation is exacerbated by the economic crisis and the fact that Sudan is one of the fastest urbanizing countries in the world, with a steady increase in the number of people migrating from rural areas to cities.

One major repercussion of climate change that is reported throughout all three states is the increasing recurrence of droughts and poor access to water due to poor and uneven rainfall. This has resulted in the reduction of ground water levels, as well as increased



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frequency of dust storms. In Kassala, the construction of dams to address this issue has led to an increase in floods causing massive damage to state infrastructure, livelihoods, and property. The case study below explores the circumstances surrounding the construction of the Setit Dam in Kassala, including the displacement of local communities, compensation, and the impact of the dam on their access to resources, services, and the environment.

As a means of providing alternative livelihood options, fishing boats were distributed. Furthermore, all of the compensation committees formed failed to demonstrate transparency practices and lacked women's representation. As a result, women-headed households were not compensated at all.

Moreover, respondents and local experts emphasized that the previous regime had leased the farmland adjacent to the dam to foreign investors from Saudi Arabia for a period of 99 years without any prior community consultation. A local expert explained that this disadvantaged local farms as it prohibited their access to

Case Study:

Socioeconomic and Environmental Impacts of the Upper Atbara and Setit Dam

The Setit Dam Complex is located about 20 kilometers (12 mi) upstream from the junction of the Atbarah and Setit rivers, about 80 kilometers (50 mi) south of the Khashm Al-Girba Dam between Kassala and Al-Gadarif states. The construction of the dam began in 2009 and was completed in 2015, resulting in the displacement of 11 villages (8 villages on the west bank of the dam belonging to Al-Gadarif state and 3 villages on the eastern side of the dam belonging to Kassala state).

Beyond their displacement, the Setit Dam has had a wide variety of repercussions on the lives of the local communities, including loss of traditional jobs on farmland, changes in food habits due to the loss of vegetation and household livestock, and increasing incidents of attacks by wildlife, such as scorpions, snakes, and crocodiles.

To a large extent, the dam has had a negative impact on the economic situation of the local community and, as of yet, none of the landowners have been compensated for the loss of their farming land, livestock, or homes.

Sudan's environmental policies are based on the country's strategic and development plans, the constitution, and global targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The country is currently in a 25-Year Development Strategy (2007–2031), which will conclude a year after the end date of the SDGs. Other key framework policies pertaining to the environment are the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim National Constitution. The Constitutional Declaration is clear on the need to maintain a clean environment, protect biodiversity and better manage land resources. Sudan's environment policies include the forestry policy, which can be traced to 1932 and has been amended to reflect new forms of forest tenure that encourage afforestation and adding economic value to forests (Government of Sudan, 1992), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans aimed at protecting and conserving the country's rich biological resources, and water policies designed to protect watersheds.



4 STAKEHOLDERS AND KEY ACTORS

4.1 Key Actors from Civil Society and Entry Points

In all three states, the main governmental bodies that address gender, conflict and environment issues are the General Department of Women at the State Ministry of Health and Social Development, Family and Children Court, the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Finance and Economy (Women's Activities Department), the Zakat Chamber, the Al-Gadarif Microfinance Foundation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Production (Livestock Department), the Psychological Support Center, the Sudanese Family Planning Association, and Protection Centers (safe centers for women). These institutions are primarily focused on service provision and are highly dependent on technical and financial support from international organisations such as Save the Children, WFP, and UNICEF for the provision of basic services due to ongoing instability.

The key services provided by these organisations include fostering community mechanisms for the protection of women and girls from physical or sexual abuse. This is achieved through specialty units such as the family and child protection centers, police stations, and State Ministry of Justice units. However, there is a predominant dissatisfaction with the performance of these units due to a lack of appropriate referral pathways, poor reporting mechanisms especially in workplaces in government institutions, schools and universities, and the lack of legal and medical training for service providers. Additional challenges raised by civil activists included strict traditions, such as covering up and stigmatization, that worked against protection programs from these forms of violence, especially sexual assault.

Key civil society actors in Al-Gadarif include the Friends of Peace and Development Association, the El-Tawaki Organisation, the Women's Development Association, the Sudanese Environmental Conservation Society – Gadarif branch, the Zainab Organisation, the ZOA Organisation, the Ma'an umbrella organisation for women's development, together with other national and international non-governmental organisations. It is worth noting that in Red Sea state, over the last 5 years, more than 3000 community-based CSOs were registered (Annex 5). Among the key civil society organizations

currently active in Red Sea are the Al-Gadiseya Women's Association, the Women's Associations Network of Port Sudan (30 associations), the Own Legal Forum, the Al-Salam Women's Association, and the Homyra Association. However, although these CSOs specialize in service provision and life skills training for women, their constituents are typically highly homogenous with regards to the local ethnic groups.

Unfortunately, at the time the study was conducted, youth- and women-led initiatives such as women's agricultural associations, women's cooperative associations, youth and student associations, youth Point of Light organizations, multi-purpose associations (cooperative, agricultural and service), resistance committees, change and services committees, and the Women's Development Association were not active.

These civil society organisations play the following roles in promoting gender equality, conflict resolution, and climate change mitigation:

- Awareness, education, and capacity building in the field of rights, laws and legislation related to women's rights to political and societal participation.



- Adopting programs and projects for the economic, social, and political empowerment of women.
- Provision of services to mitigate violations of women's rights and ensure GBV prevention and response.
- Coordination with all actors from government institutions, the private sector, and NGOs to support women's empowerment projects.
- Awareness, education, and capacity building on environmental laws, the benefits of protected areas, and the importance of environment protection measures.
- Advocating for environmental sustainability programs and projects.
- Implementation of livelihood and poverty-alleviation projects for vulnerable population groups, particularly for vulnerable agricultural communities.
- Awareness, education, and capacity building in the fields of negotiation, conflict resolution, peace building and peaceful coexistence, and conflict transformation.
- Adopting programs and projects for the most vulnerable groups to conflict.
- Creating partnerships with civil administrations, training and qualifying them to spread the culture of peace and social peace among their social components.
- Developing independent pathways and networks within conflict-prone communities to initiate conflict-resolution efforts.
- Coordination with all actors from government institutions, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations to support sustainable development projects.

Sudan's environmental policies are based on the country's strategic and development plans, the constitution, and global targets e.g. SDGs



Another feature of the landscape of eastern Sudan is the presence of different national and international corporations, predominantly active in the fields of agriculture and mining. In Red Sea state, private sector corporations, such as the Sudan Coast Organisation, provide support to the state in the form of WASH infrastructure maintenance, as well as support to the agricultural sector. Such support includes the introduction of vegetables such as okra and tomatoes, and new types of sorghum that require less water, take less time, and produce abundant yields. Other institutions that provide key social responsibility initiatives include the Nile Petroleum Company, which plays a major role in education, building health centers, and providing training in health education and first aid.

Moreover, some of these bodies engage in the practice of environmentally positive measures to prevent environmental deterioration. An example of the positive role that can be played by the private sector can be seen in Haya, Red Sea state. The Red Sea Mining Company provides direct support to the education of the local community by providing monetary incentives and covering a percentage of the living expenses of teachers brought from Atbara. In addition, the company provides scholarships for youth from Haya to attend state university.

Below is a list of the key challenges faced by the study participants in the eastern region, as well as the potential opportunities that can be utilized to further promote women's choices.

4.2 Opportunities and challenges to community resilience

The urbanization and development of the states has created alternative modes of income generation other than farming for women through activities such as food and tea selling.

The role of women in Red Sea state in the field of mining is limited to their participation in translating geological maps in offices, because girls are now studying geology in universities, which was previously acceptable only for boys, meaning that women's participation in mining in Red Sea state is limited to desk work (interpretation of satellite maps and information technology work)



Factors common in all three states:



Challenges:

- Failure to activate laws related to women's issues, conflict, the environment; failure to implement commitments on women's issues and rights by officials in most institutions.
- Failure to provide the necessary funding to implement activities related to women's issues, lack of tight coordination between government agencies and other actors regarding women's issues, conflict, and the environment.
- A lack of coordination of efforts in the field of women's empowerment, conflict, and the environment.
- Lack of sustainability of the work of organisations in the locality, whether local due to lack of funding or international due to shifting agendas.



Opportunities:

- The presence of a large number of women working in key government institutions that can be engaged as champions in furthering women's participation in conflict resolution.
- Potential network of local CSOs and NGOs that can be engaged in peacebuilding and environmental preservation efforts,
- The presence of national-level regulations that promote women's empowerment programs. The table below shows the key variations in the opportunities and challenges faced by each state.

The urbanization and development of the states has created alternative modes of income generation other than farming for women through activities such as food and tea selling.



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TABLE 5

Determining Factors for State Responses

| Al-Gadarif | |
|---|---|
| Challenges | Opportunities |
| At the level of state legislation, there has been no change or progress beyond the appointment of women to leadership positions. | Regarding legislation, with the efforts of certain civil society organizations and NGOs, women have been made aware of their rights in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution on women's participation, as well as the CEDAW Law and UNSCR 1325. |
| Weak public service infrastructure and delivery at state level, in terms of health, water, roads, and education. | Economically, there are many opportunities for women's empowerment, especially since women make up the majority of the workforce. |
| Despite receiving various courses of training, women are still controlled by customs and traditions, which impede their development in many fields. | |
| The percentage of women working in management positions in some localities is very low. | |
| Traditional gold mining in areas such as Salmeen has greatly affected women's living conditions through its impacts on their agricultural production. | |
| High turnover, low capacity of government staff at all levels. | |
| Kassala | |
| Challenges | Opportunities |
| Women's rights are infringed, as they are not consulted on certain issues due to their low levels of awareness and education. | Poverty reduction programs should capitalize on the state's comparative advantages and resources, such as livestock and fertile lands, focusing on innovative mechanisms to improve productivity, as well as the creation of cooperatives and the promotion of marketing opportunities for women. |
| Lack of proper planning for environmental issues, and poor enforcement of environmental laws that take into consideration gender issues. | Existence of supporting, specialized INGOs. |
| Inadequate financial support | Migration of Beja from rural areas to urban areas exposes them to a different culture. Migrants maintain strong relationships with their host communities, which offers a huge opportunity as an entry point to deal with migrants. |
| Customs and traditions that deny women's rights | |
| Absence of active civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations in the locality | |
| Lack of interaction of government departments and the private sector in the locality regarding gender issues | |
| Red Sea | |
| Challenges | Opportunities |
| Many livelihood programs implemented in the state are not sustainable, hence their activities at the community level end with the program cycle. | A number of new NGOs and CSOs have been recently registered in the state that aim to raise awareness in the areas of GBV and women's issues, as well as providing livelihood and life skills training for women. |
| Women face limitations in their access to technology, information, and the internet. This is partially due to poor coverage in remote areas of the state. | Due to the ongoing economic crisis, more women are becoming active, to some extent, in the public sphere. |
| There is a lack of training, especially among women, on the use of technology in agriculture and livestock care, exacerbated by the lack of access to essential medicines and vaccines to care for their livestock at home. | |
| As a result of environmental change and the contamination of local water sources in mining areas, women and children travel long distances fetch water, exposing them to attacks. | More girls are enrolled in the formal education system. |
| There is a tribal culture of customs, traditions, closed-mindedness, and mistrust of outsiders. | |
| There is a lack of enforcement of environmental laws, in addition to the exclusion of women's issues from currently existing committees/forums. | |

4.3 Suggested Roles for Religious and Community Leaders in Addressing Gender-Conflict- Environment Issues

The roles played by religious and community leaders vary between the states; however, it is worth noting that their stature and power is more significant in rural areas compared to urban. At all state levels—urban or rural, the roles that religious and civic leaders can play in promoting women’s empowerment and women’s political participation as suggested by the participants include the following:

- Religious and civil leaders can undertake awareness and advocacy programs urging their local communities to adopt positive environmental behaviors.
- As civil administrations are the primary governing bodies in rural areas, it is essential to engage them in gender equality, conflict resolution and climate change mitigation efforts. Their participation can be implemented through mosque lectures or public gatherings. These approaches necessitate appropriate training for leaders on key issues.
- Throughout all three states, civil administration is entirely comprised of men. Hence it is essential for these bodies to create spaces for women to report on violations against them and be able to effectively debate over conflicts with their male counterparts.
- The native administration is empowered by the government; hence it is essential that members of the bodies display respect and tolerance towards each other.

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1. Gender and Conflict

Conflicts in east Sudan region are nothing new. The first reported conflict in eastern Sudan was in 1933, between the Hadendoa and Rashayda tribes, in a case of tribal disputes over resources which was settled by the native administration. The signing of the East Sudan Agreement in 2006 has created a new reality by changing the dynamics and transforming conflict from resource-based conflict usually settled and reconciled through traditional mechanisms, to more violent conflicts fueled by a tribal/ethnic and political agenda. The implementation of the agreement has laid the ground for current conflict dynamics in three ways:



5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This Gender, Conflict and Environment Analysis seeks mainly to establish an updated diagnosis of gender disparities in eastern Sudan, provide reliable and gender-disaggregated data of the various sectors, and propose solutions to support the planning and implementation of UN Women projects in the region.

1. The unsettled issues related to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) protocols have led to the increased spread of small arms and military attitudes, systematic fragmentation, and the splitting of the unified East Front (EF) into more than seven small political parties motivated by different objectives and agendas.
2. The allocation of political and administrative posts based on a quota system along ethnic lines has sharpened ethno-political polarization in the three eastern Sudan states and ignited hitherto repressed resentment among several ethnic groups in the region.
3. The failed implementation of the East Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund that was supposed to address root causes of poverty, due to the dominance of the NCP and the government in decision making within the ESRDF, lack of transparency and accountability, as well as mismanagement and inappropriate spending and resource allocation.

Women play a very limited role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. They are excluded from tribal councils and native administrations that negotiate truce agreements between the disputing parties, and rarely attend national peacebuilding talks such as the Juba discussions. This exclusion further reduces representation of women's issues.

Women have been affected drastically by tribal conflicts in eastern Sudan. This is manifested in further restricted mobility with regard to marketplaces, health facilities, training, and education opportunities. Mobility limitations are particularly damaging for women in the informal sector, as this leaves them with shorter periods of time in which to sell their products. In Kassala, many women lost their business capital during the lockdown of the marketplaces, in addition to losing a portion of their customer base due to tribal polarization.

Destruction of the social fabric and neighborhoods has severely impacted women's social networks. This has had a profound effect on women's current social and political roles in society, which are a source of greater vulnerability for women over and above their domestic and reproductive role.



Conflict in eastern Sudan has resulted in a very negative impact on women's roles in three ways: by reducing their access to services such as health care for themselves and their families, by threatening their productive role through reduced mobility and hence reduced access to markets and production sites, causing a loss of their customer base and assets and an erosion of their capital, and finally by eroding women's social role via the destruction of the social fabric and neighborhood networks.

Despite the significant impact of conflict on women, they play a very limited role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. They are excluded from tribal councils and native administrations that negotiate truce agreements between the disputing parties, and rarely attend national peacebuilding talks such as the Juba discussions. This exclusion further reduces representation of women's issues in development agendas.

A complex web of environmental, sociocultural, economical, geopolitical, and historical factors has caused and aggravated conflict in eastern Sudan. The root causes of conflict in the region have been attributed to:

- Political factors; conflicts along borders, administrative and political aspirations of different groups, political and tribal divisions of localities, and appointments to government positions on a tribal basis. The term "marginalization" has been used by the Beja Congress (BC) since its launch in 1958, when the first meeting was organized to protest against the tribe's peripheral, or marginalized, position and the marginalization and exclusion of peripheral regions by the center. At a macro-political level, the continued
 1. exploitation of the region's resources by the federal government,
 2. poor governance, mismanagement of funds, embezzlement, and biases in implementation, and
 3. poor representation of the different constituents in peace agreements have contributed to increasing tension and conflict in the region.
 - Sociocultural factors: The leading sociocultural issue is the issue of identity. Disputes over who is considered Sudanese and who is not lay at the heart of recent tribal conflicts fueled by tribal polarization and hate speech informed by tribalism, ethnocentrism, and tribal affiliations. Imbalances in power relations between farmers and pastoralists lead to the emergence of subgroups viewed as outsiders. Imbalances in power relations in eastern Sudan rotate around many dichotomies: tribal leaders versus local communities, urban centers versus rural areas, rich farmers versus small farmers and pastoralists, the eastern Sudan region versus the center, and indigenous groups versus migrants. The rise in tribalism and tribal polarization is attributed to people's perceptions and judgments of each other as individuals and social groups, and increased discrimination and exclusion. These power imbalances interact to fuel the current conflicts.
 - Socioeconomic factors: The impact of successive years of drought, historical injustices with regards to development and social services, particularly in rural areas and among nomadic communities, and armed conflict (1994-2006) have all contributed to the creation of a highly vulnerable community and a declining capacity for resilience to environmental and socioeconomic shocks, as well as large numbers of IDPs from rural areas moving into urban areas, especially state capitals.
 - Structural factors include weak political parties, poor governance, unequal development, and the inability to manage diversity. This level of complexity requires a comprehensive sustainable solution rather than relying on simplified modes of conflict management. Almost half of the respondents from each state considered their state to be experiencing on-going conflict and insecurity. Despite this complexity, the transitional government has acknowledged Galad as a conflict management practice. (Galad is a word of honor given by two conflicting parties to adhere to a time-sensitive, non-aggression pact arranged by mediators). At the present time, this traditional mechanism is neither well known nor recognized by some of the actors involved in the current tribal disputes. Moreover, the Khartoum-imposed Galad has not been followed by the requisite steps that are supposed to come after Galad in the conciliation process.
- Failure to end these conflicts will have significant fall-out, as they hinder economic empowerment and development in the east due to recurrent blockages of



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trade routes and ports, leading to further inflation of commodity prices.

The limited access of local farmers and herders to livestock and produce markets curtails their profit generation and lowers their socio-economic status. As of yet, security forces are not viewed as active agents in conflict-resolution and protection measures. Participants described their roles as limited to acting as a barrier between parties in conflict rather than addressing the causes of conflict, attributed to the nationwide political unrest and lack of strict guidelines for responses.

5.1.2. Gender and the Environment

Like many parts of the world, Sudan is experiencing an array of climatic changes: principally increasing temperatures and droughts, which negatively impact local agriculture and grazing practices. Additional factors that have exacerbated the changes in the regional environment include:

- Deforestation due to excessive cutting of forests to expand agricultural land and create settlements,
- Mining practices that result in land toxicity from waste products and use of mercury, as well as landscape changes resulting in the accumulation of water from heavy rains in excavation pits,
- Land grabbing practices by corporate bodies that invest in large, mechanized rain-fed farms that draw on natural water sources, and
- Overgrowth of mesquite trees, which prevents the growth of other plants and vegetation.

Climate change increases the vulnerability of farmers, pastoralists, and others who rely on rain-fed agriculture, and, as pastoralists and farmers fight over resources, pre-existing communal tensions are on the rise.

Disputes over land tenure and rights of ownership, access, and use of natural resources such as land and water resources are now at the heart of conflicts in eastern Sudan, especially Al-Gadarif state.

Moreover, Sudan's high population growth will put more pressure on resources to meet the high demand for food, water, housing, and other services, particularly safe drinking water.

Unfortunately, due to the poor infrastructure in the region, water contamination caused by old pipeline systems and water shortages due to delays in installation of pipes are increasingly common. This consequently

results in higher levels of food insecurity due to water scarcity and economic burdens, which in turn result in higher prevalence of malnutrition among women and children.

Extreme climate events such as floods, droughts, desertification, and sea-level rise are likely to force increasing numbers of people to migrate from rural to urban areas, away from increasingly arid areas and low-lying coastal areas, and often outside the region.

The resulting massive migrations could spark violent conflicts over access to and control of key resources such as land and water within the country. Considering what the region has already experienced, this will impose increased hardships on the population groups usually left behind, i.e., women, children, and the elderly. The impact would be particularly harsh for women and girls. In spite of social, cultural, political, and economic factors, competition over depleting resources remains the most significant trigger of conflict in the east Sudan region.

Women have limited access to land and irrigation. Mechanized farming has put more pressure on women pastoralists and small farmers in general. It is also responsible for deforestation which, in turn, reduces women's and pastoralists' access to forest products. Women and men face many challenges as a result of environmental issues, including deforestation due to overcutting of forests to expand agricultural land and create settlements, mining practices that result in land toxicity from waste products and use of mercury, as well as landscape changes that result in the accumulation of water from heavy rains in excavation pits, land grabbing practices by corporate bodies that invest in large, mechanized rain-fed farms drawing on natural water sources, and overgrowth of mesquite trees, which prevent the growth of other plants and vegetation.

5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. General Recommendations to the Government

- Ensure women and girls' participation as essential partners in climate change, environmental responses, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, as well as their ability to participate in decision-making spaces by incorporating gender considerations into climate change mitigation plans at all levels: local, state, national, and tailoring resilience-building livelihood programs to women.



- Enhance the development of inclusive, gender- and conflict-sensitive natural resource management mechanisms.
- Establish clear mechanisms to protect women and girls from gender-based violence by setting up protection centers in the localities, assigning protection specialists to public institutions such as public schools and hospitals, and creating a hotline to take complaints. These efforts must be complemented by mass media campaigns to raise public awareness of the services.
- Involve civil society organisations in government and NGO planning in an advisory capacity in the areas of conflict resolution, raising community awareness of environmental threats, and devising new incentives and methods to encourage individuals to adopt environmental protection initiatives.
- Poverty reduction programs should capitalize on the resources in the state, such as livestock and fertile lands, focusing on innovative mechanisms to improve production and on promotion of marketing opportunities.
- Establish alternative herding routes to reduce conflicts between farmers and herders and government, in consultation with native administration, landowners, and herders.

Build local dams and water harvesting tools to provide protection from torrential rains and floods, as well as to ensure a consistent water supply throughout the year.
- Raise the awareness of government corporations about the importance of preserving the environment.
- Impose strict guidelines for mining and agricultural projects.
- Conduct routine assessments on the impact of mining activities and water pollution due to waste disposal on the local environment.
- Research and studies conducted by university students should be published and made available.
- There should be coordination mechanisms between different governmental institutions and sectors on issues of gender, conflict, and the environment.

5.2.2 General Recommendations to UN Women and Other Development Partners

- Raise women's political awareness and train them on legislation, rights, and conflict-resolution techniques.
- Include women in peacebuilding, negotiation, and implementation processes, including key initiatives such as the East Sudan Conference
- Invest in promoting women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision- and policy-making around climate change mitigation, natural resource management, and conflict resolution.
- Conduct an in-depth study to assess the impact of nutritional habits and the lack of latrines on women's health.
- Educate women about the peacebuilding process, and how to properly raise and educate future generations to avoid perpetuating tribalism or violence against women.

Support youth-led projects, vocational training,
- the promotion of open dialogue on social peace, and constructive community works.
- Enhance climate-resilient agriculture project interventions in areas severely affected by climate change.
- Address intersectionality between gender, conflict, and the environment by mainstreaming gender and environment perspectives in projects, policies and peace processes designed to intersect.
- Provide support for a social protection network for women with the allocation of a telephone hotline to report all forms of violence against women.
- Support the creation of job opportunities for women by encouraging small-scale enterprises.
- Strengthen the internal communication and organisation of women's civil society organisations, and encourage the establishment of a regional umbrella agenda to strengthen their leadership.
- Provide institutional and technical support to identify priorities and design plans that address and respond to local climate, gender inequality and peace issues.



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- Promote the employment and engagement of women and youth in fostering inter-tribal conflict resolution efforts and ending hate speech.

- The effects of climate change in eastern Sudan need to be addressed strategically and comprehensively, with the involvement of different actors including women and men in local communities, governmental institutions, civil society, and international actors.

Attract more actors to support local communities in eastern Sudan in addressing conflict and environment problems.

- Educate and raise awareness in young men and women to effectively eradicate social stereotypes and unfair power relations.

Raise women's political awareness and train them on legislation, rights, and conflict-resolution techniques.

TABLE 5

| 5.2.3. State-Specific Recommendations for UN Women and Other Development Partners | | |
|--|--|---|
| Al-Gadarif | | |
| Recommendations | Action | Target/entry point |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform agriculture, forestry and livestock policies and frameworks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the revision of agriculture and forestry state and national laws, policies and plans on agriculture, forestry, and livestock. Ensure the mainstreaming of gender and social responsibility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry CSOs Farmers' associations and groups |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote peacebuilding practices between pastoralists and farmers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate state-level dialogue forums to build trust between pastoralists and farmers, ensuring equal participation by women and mainstreaming of women's agendas in these forums. Strengthen communication between women pastoralists and women farmers through the creation of nuclear forums that discuss shared agendas and provide relevant training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's associations Community champions |
| Kassala | | |
| Recommendations | Action | Target/entry point |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination of a culture of peace and non-violence among women and youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support women-led peacebuilding initiatives and efforts. Conduct social media campaigns focusing on peacebuilding and combating hate speech. Provide civic education and training for women and youth, especially in rural areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community champions Women's associations CSOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of fire-arms control protocols | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the implementation of recall programs to reduce the possession of unregistered arms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local protection units |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the rights of local women and men in utilizing their own land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train men and women affected by the Setit Dam to advocate against the negative impacts of the dam and claim compensation for their displacement. Provide access to safe drinking water and basic services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community champions |
| Red Sea | | |
| Recommendations | Action | Target/entry point |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing livelihood programs and facilitating women's access to markets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop contextualized training utilizing local resources such as pearls, leather, and fisheries to improve their economic situations. Strengthen production chains and create linkages between existing associations to improve the quality of products and ensure their marketability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating self-employment opportunities for women and youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change negative community perceptions about mesquite trees and train women and youth on alternative management and use of mesquite in oils, compressed coal, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing corporate mining practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct studies to assess the effects of mercury on local health. Conduct public campaigns addressing the hazards in relation to reproductive rights, environmental health, and water toxicity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs |

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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



South Sudan Office
Petronas Building -Khartoum

Sudan is a country that has been plunged in a turmoil of conflict since its independence in 1955. The causes of the conflict may change and vary over time and according to the implications of the proxy causes that may arise. However, the impact of the conflict remains unchanged, resulting in loss of lives, massive displacement, environmental degradation, impoverishment and the escalation of poverty, and human rights violations including sexual and gender-based violence. The impact of the conflict negatively affects the entire population, but women and children suffer the most. This study is intended to explore the linkages between gender, environment, and conflict in eastern Sudan, which is a region with a recent history of frequent conflicts, and also a region hard hit by environmental degradation due to cyclical droughts and heavy deforestation, among several other environmental shocks.

This report provides a short contextual analysis of the conflict in Sudan and specifically in eastern Sudan, and describes the methodology used, which is a triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data in addition to secondary information generated by other organizations and the government.

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