



IN BRIEF



REGIONAL GENDER ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF SUDAN CONFLICT ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SUDAN AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Photo: UN Women

ABOUT REGIONAL GENDER ASSESSMENT OF SUDAN CONFLICT REPORT SEPTEMBER 2023 IN BRIEF

This brief provides the findings and recommendations of the regional gender analysis of the Sudan conflict, which UN Women conducted between July and August 2023. The principal objective of the assessment was to provide gender-related analysis and information that humanitarian actors can use to strengthen gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of girls and women in humanitarian responses relating to the conflict in Sudan. The secondary objective of the assessment was to provide information on the participation of Sudanese women in ongoing Peace and Security initiatives and recommendations on strengthening women's participation in peace and security initiatives. The methodology involved detailed desk review and interviews with 50 key informants from the Eastern Africa Regional Offices, Middle East and Northern Africa Regional Offices, Egypt, Chad, CAR, South Sudan and Sudan.

BACKGROUND

On 15 April 2023, fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) erupted in Sudan's capital city of Khartoum and spread to other regions. The conflict has led to mass displacements in Sudan and neighboring countries.

As of 5 September 2023, about 4,075,930¹ individuals (814,518 households) have been recently internally displaced in 3,733 locations across all of Sudan's 18 states and 1,007,116² into neighboring countries of Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, with 52 per cent of the displaced in neighboring countries estimated to be women and 48 per cent men.³ Egypt had 317,230 refugees, of which 75 per cent were estimated to be women and children. Chad had 412,336 refugees, with 85 per cent estimated as women and children. CAR had 18,545 refugees and returnees, of which 88 per cent were women and children. South Sudan had 258,277 refugees and returnees, of which 73 per cent were estimated to be women and children, and Ethiopia had 35,567 refugees, of which 61 per cent were estimated to be women and children.⁴ Before this, Sudan had 1.14 million

1 "UNHCR data on Sudan situation." <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation> (The date the data was accessed should be indicated.)

2 Ibid

3 "Sudan Situation - UNHCR External Update #25 - 4 September 2023." <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/103207> (The date the data was accessed should be indicated.)

4 "UNHCR data on Sudan situation." <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation> (The date the data was accessed should be indicated.)

refugees from South Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Eritrea, and other nationalities.⁵ The clashes, which started in Northern and Khartoum States, have spread to Darfur (Nyala Janoub locality, South Darfur and Al Fasher Locality, North Darfur) and Kordofan (Kadugli Locality) regions.⁶ The respect for international human rights, women's rights and humanitarian law has been severely compromised.

The conflict has had significant gendered aspects, impacting not only Sudan but also its neighboring nations, specifically Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Egypt. These countries were already grappling with economic, political, and climate-related vulnerabilities, with the added burden of conflict in the cases of CAR, Chad, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. The Eastern and Horn of Africa region is particularly susceptible to conflicts, climate-related events like droughts and floods, and disease outbreaks. Furthermore, the countries are yet to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the key gendered impacts from recent UN Women assessments in Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad include mass displacements of women and children, loss of social safety nets, shifts in gender roles for displaced women, food and nutrition security challenges for women and young children, Gender Based Violence against women and girls, forced recruitment of boys and men, disrupted access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and interrupted learning and livelihoods. These factors increase the vulnerabilities of women, girls, men, and boys in the crisis. These

challenges affect women and men differently, leading to an overall disempowerment of women in terms of their freedom from violence, health, education, mobility, and economic well-being. If the conflict in Sudan persists, it is likely to have adverse repercussions on the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of the neighboring countries.

METHODOLOGY

Fifty (50) online interviews were conducted with Key Informants, comprising humanitarian actors, representatives of relevant institutions, and Women, Peace, and Security advocates. Respondents were selected from the Eastern Africa Regional Offices, Middle East and Northern Africa Regional Offices, Egypt, Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Sudan. Additionally, three consultative meetings were convened: one with the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Gender in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) Network, one with the Cross-Cutting Task Force for Sudan, and one with the Protection Working Group in Chad. The secondary literature review covered HRPs, Refugee Response Plans, and reports on Food Security, Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Protection, and GBV. It also involved Refugee Response Updates, data from IOM and UNHCR and other humanitarian updates, Country Gender Assessment Reports, and Women's Rights Organizations documents. Notably, on-site visits to Sudan and neighboring countries were excluded due to operational constraints.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ "IOM DTM Sudan-situation-report-18." <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-18?close=true> ((The date the data was accessed should be indicated.)

KEY FINDINGS

The key findings are organised thematically.

KEY FINDING 1

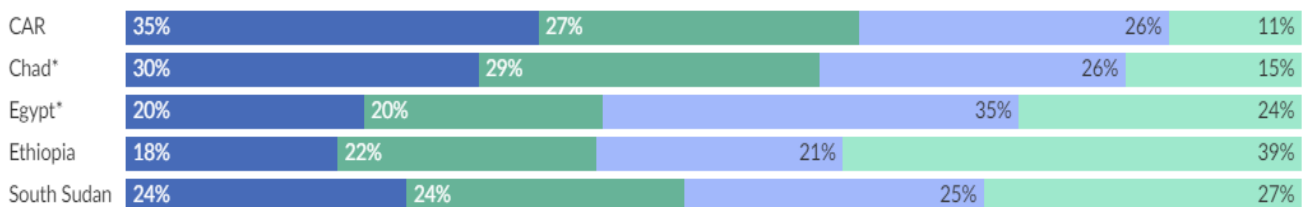
Mass displacements of a predominantly female population in Sudan and outside the country into East, Central and North African Countries

- Nearly 5 million people have been forced to flee their homes from 15 April, the majority of them women (52 per cent) and children (25.9 per cent), with combined women and children being 77.9 per cent. The high proportion of displaced women and children has led to a surge in female-headed households taking on caregiving responsibilities during displacement, demanding an enhanced humanitarian response focused on women's needs.

- Internal Displacement:** 4,075,930 Individuals (814,518 households) have been recently internally displaced in 3,733 locations across all of Sudan's 18 states. Partners reports indicate significant gaps and challenges in receiving life-saving protection and support experienced by female-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, young boys and girls and children occasioned by displacement in Sudan.
- External Displacement:** UNHCR and IOM reports show that as of 5 September 2023, about 4,075,930 individuals (814,518 households) have been recently internally displaced in 3,733 locations across all of Sudan's 18 states and 1,007,116 into neighboring countries of Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan as shown in the figure below:

Demographic breakdown of new arrivals

Girls and Boys refers to ages 0-17. Women and Men are 18+



*age/sex breakdown only available for those registered by UNHCR.

Source: UNHCR, IOM & Governments (as of 6 September, 2023)

Key Recommendations

1. Conduct a continuous assessment of the situation of vulnerable gender categories by state and by country of displacement to provide information that can be used to strengthen gender-responsive humanitarian support.
2. Facilitate within humanitarian coordination mechanisms, gender analysis and discussions aimed at building an understanding of the feminised displacement crisis in Sudan and the extent to which available humanitarian services are responsive to the needs of a predominantly female population.
3. Track at the regional level, humanitarian assistance targeting Sudanese women and girls.
4. Conduct studies on the interactions between conflict in Sudan, displacement, women's rights and coping strategies of female and male-headed households in the region.
5. Assess preparedness to receive and provide life-saving, timely and appropriate services to large numbers of women and girls (Women and girls-targeted humanitarian support) in the countries receiving the displaced from Sudan.
6. Continuously monitor planned, met and unmet funding needs for women and girls-targeted humanitarian support in East, Central and North Africa from Sudan.

KEY FINDING 2

Gender-Based Violence Targeting Mainly Women and Girls

Prima facie: Reports indicate that while several countries, including South Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, CAR, Libya, and Egypt, have implemented *prima facie* recognition for those fleeing the Sudan conflict, it was not consistently applied, with Egypt adopting this recognition policy in August, following visa regulations introduced during periods of high displacement from Sudan to Egypt. The non-application of *prima facie* meant that every Sudanese arriving on its territory required an entry visa, subjecting a large majority population of women and girls, estimated at 57 per cent⁷ (combined women and children 78 per cent⁸), to lengthy waiting periods for entry visas into Egypt.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):

Conflict-affected women and girls are facing increased risk of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence during displacement and while in temporary accommodation.⁹ More than 3 million women and girls in Sudan were at risk of gender-based violence before 15 April 2023.

- Testimonies from women in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State revealed systematic use of sexual violence by armed groups along the road into South Sudan, calling for immediate action in strengthening gender-based violence (GBV) response capacity, including clinical management of rape (CMR), psychosocial support (PSS), GBV case management and basic needs assistance.
- Older women, adolescent girls and women and girls living with disabilities face additional concerns and challenges in this unstable

⁷ "UNHCR data on Sudan situation." <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation> (The date the data was accessed should be indicated.)

⁸ Ibid

⁹ "Crisis Continues: GBV Sub-Sector Sudan Situation Brief Update – 16 June 2023." [GBV Sub Cluster Sudan Situation Brief June 2023](#).

environment. Vulnerable men and boys are also exposed to the risks of GBV.¹⁰

- The return to communities after displacement 20-30 years later can be incredibly challenging for women and children, who are often vulnerable to exploitation and gender-based violence. Humanitarian organisations should conduct assessments to examine the risks faced by women returning to communities without social safety nets and where access and control of productive assets are male centered.
- Upscaled support for GBV prevention and response in Sudan and the countries receiving those fleeing from Sudan is grossly underfunded, significantly limiting the ability of humanitarian actors to respond.
- Further vulnerabilities may arise when access is reported to be difficult for those leaving Sudan and arriving in remote locations in countries of destination, particularly in CAR, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Hosting countries will need additional support to provide protection and critical life-saving assistance. A compounding factor includes the displacement of survivors into neighboring countries of South Sudan, CAR and Chad, which have ongoing conflict, putting them at further risk of re-exposure to GBV.

Key Recommendations

1. Strengthen the awareness and understanding among relevant state actors of the importance of granting prima facie to women and girls, men and boys fleeing the conflict in Sudan.
2. Conduct regular assessments of risks for large numbers of women and girl returnees into communities without social safety nets and where access and control of productive assets, including land, is male centered.

3. Advocate for prevention of and response to SEA, GBV and CRSV in Sudan and the neighboring countries.
4. Urgently scale up gender-based violence prevention and response services in Sudan and neighboring countries.
5. Strengthen armed actors' awareness of International Humanitarian Law, including on CRSV.
6. Strengthen cross-border and cross-country referral pathways to ensure displaced survivors are plugged into a seamless referral mechanism.

KEY FINDING 3

Displacements from Sudan and Gendered Food, Nutrition and Livelihoods Insecurity in East and Central Africa Region

Food Insecurity: Sudan, along with countries in the region hosting displaced individuals from Sudan, is facing severe food insecurity. There are alarming numbers of pregnant and lactating women, as well as children under the age of five, experiencing acute malnutrition. The lack of adequate support services in the affected areas exacerbates this crisis. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) data for these countries indicates that more than 30 million people are expected to suffer from food insecurity in Sudan and neighboring nations in 2023.

Between July and September 2023, conflict, displacement, and economic decline led to over 20 million people in Sudan experiencing acute food insecurity, with particular concentration in conflict-affected regions; in Chad, three-quarters of departments faced critical or serious food insecurity, with nearly 1.8 million children under five at risk of acute malnutrition, and in the Central African Republic, around 2.7

million people, or 44 per cent of the population, grappled with high levels of acute food insecurity between September 2022 and March 2023.

Livelihoods Shocks: Livelihood shocks, income loss, and the absence of male household heads due to the conflict are further exacerbating the vulnerability of already marginalised female populations among those displaced by the conflict in Sudan. This heightened vulnerability may compel them to resort to harmful coping strategies.

Key Recommendations

1. Advocate for prioritised funding to meet the food security needs of households and individuals with heightened gender-related vulnerabilities, including those hosting IDPs.
2. Conduct regular assessments to identify and support women's urgent nutrition, food and livelihood needs in displacement situations. Small recovery livelihood activities to support the women can be initiated where feasible.
3. Strengthen the capacities of national and state-level Technical Working Groups on nutrition, food, and livelihood security information systems to produce timely gender-informed analysis.
4. Continuously monitor multisectoral gender assessment of food, nutrition and livelihood situations affecting Sudanese in the region.
5. Support host populations across the region to mitigate the potential effects of aggravating gender inequalities in nutrition, food and livelihoods.

KEY FINDING 4

Urgency in Funding Projects Targeting Women in Humanitarian Response to Sudan Crisis

- The insufficient allocation of funds to Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) in Sudan and its neighboring countries and the Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan constitutes a formidable challenge. This funding shortfall severely hampers humanitarian stakeholders' ability to address the needs of newly arrived refugees adequately. Furthermore, there is a concerning deficit in financial support for projects specifically designed to cater to the unique requirements of displaced Sudanese women and girls.
- As of 8 September 2023, for projects significantly contributing to gender equality, including across age groups (4M¹¹), Chad 20.8 per cent, Sudan 19.3 per cent and South Sudan 42.2 per cent, funding requests are met. For projects principally promoting gender equality, including across age groups (4 T¹²), Chad 47 per cent, Sudan 5.8 per cent and South Sudan 45 per cent funding requests are met. All affected countries noted low funding for GBV projects: CAR 13.9 per cent, Chad 25.9 per cent, Ethiopia 4.4 per cent, Sudan 18.2 per cent and South Sudan 36.9 per cent of funding needs were reflected in the FTS as met.
- Women's Rights and Women-Led Organisations in Sudan face significant funding challenges while actively providing humanitarian assistance to affected populations voluntarily, often with minimal resources. Some of these organisations have experienced a notable decrease in personnel due to displacement, resulting in them operating with limited staff.

¹¹ 4 M means the project will significantly contribute to gender equality, including across age groups.

¹² The project is principally about promoting gender equality, including across age groups.

- Due to the ongoing conflict and displacements, it is difficult to ascertain the current status of Women's Rights and Women-Led Organizations in Sudan. However, in cases where Emergency Rooms are operational, the successes achieved can be partially attributed to the involvement of leaders from

these organisations who deliver humanitarian aid to communities through informal partnerships. It is imperative to support these frontline organisations by enhancing their capacities to sustain their services and facilitating access to flexible funding mechanisms.

Figure 2

HRP Gender and Age Marker Trends 2021-2023 (Source: fts.unocha.org Date 08 September 2023)

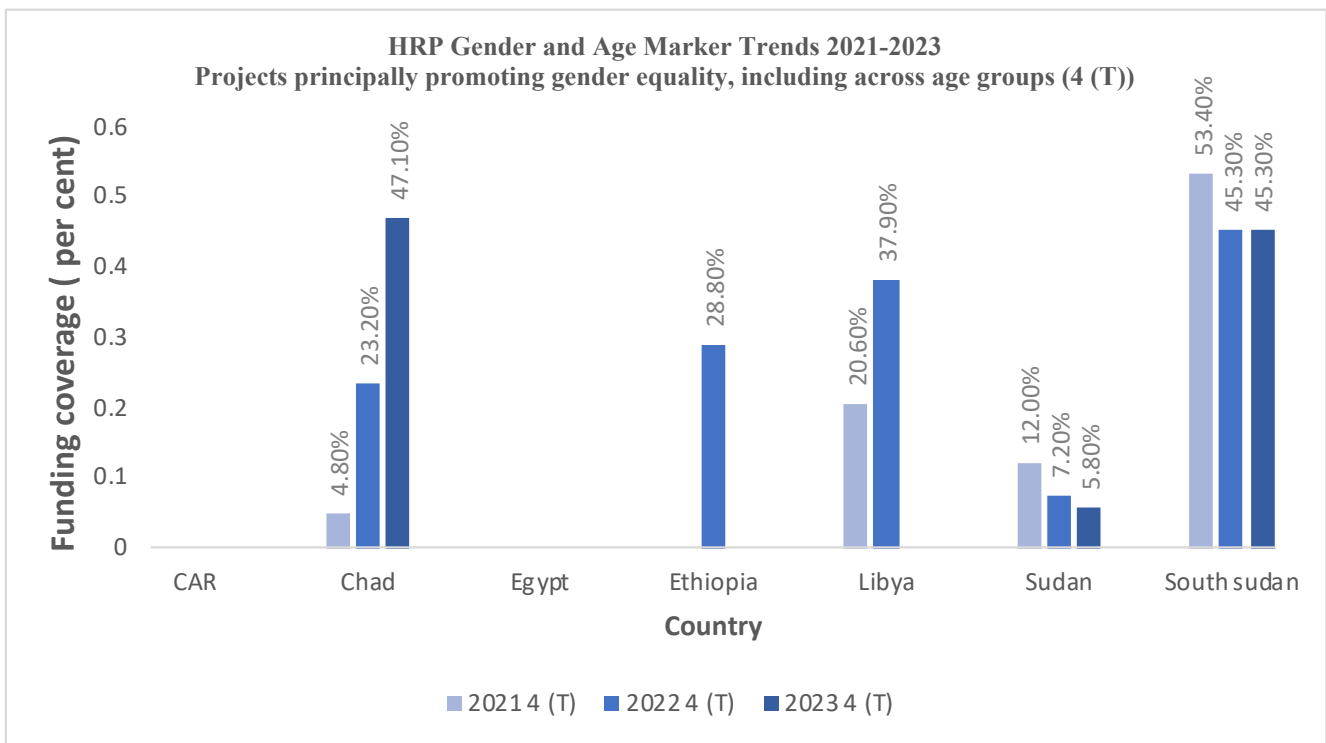


Figure 3

HRP Gender and Age Marker Trends 2021-2023 (Source: fts.unocha.org Date 08 September 2023)

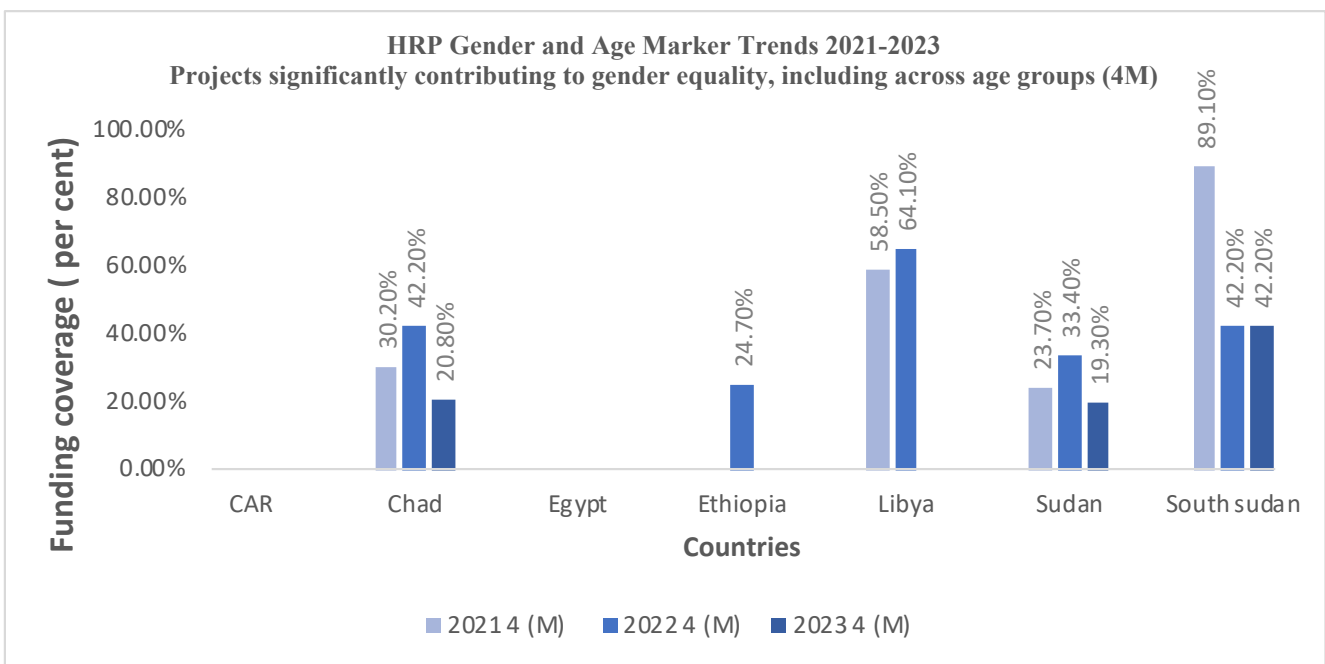
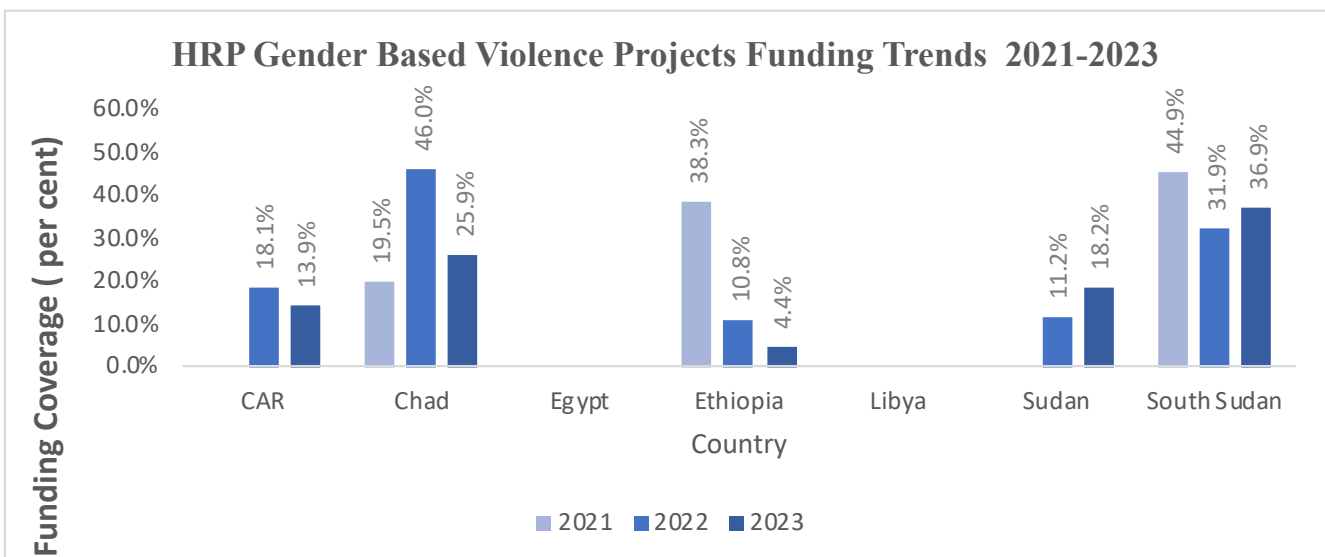


Figure 4

HRP Gender-Based Violence Projects Funding Trends 2021-2023



Key Recommendations

1. Advocate for increased funding for women-specific needs and projects on gender mainstreaming.
2. Adopt a no-regret approach to financing women's organisations with the capacity to implement, and where need be, a twinning approach between local and international organisations in response to the Sudan crisis.
3. Support the capacity strengthening for Women-Led/Women's Rights Organisations and Women's Networks and their inclusion in relevant humanitarian coordination structures.
4. Scale-up funding models such as the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund have in-built flexibility and intentionally focus on partnering with women's Rights Organisations and Women-Led Organisations in responding to the needs of women and girls displaced in and from Sudan.
5. Systematically conduct a gender tracking of funds received through WPS, Refugee and Humanitarian financing arrangements in the region and for countries receiving displaced persons from Sudan.

KEY FINDING 5

Gender Coordination and gender data gaps at the onset of the crisis in Sudan make it challenging to use gender data for planning and response.

- Despite the systematic availability of population movement data by gender and age breakdown in UNHCR CORE, significant gender data gaps prevail on displacements inside Sudan and in countries in the region: non-uniform collection and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data was noted in population movement and the reporting on

response, this may limit informed planning and response decisions.

- Sudanese women inside Sudan and in different countries of displacement, namely CAR, Chad, Egypt and South Sudan, are self-coordinating and actively participating in humanitarian action as frontline workers and beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance, indicating their resilience and need to strengthen their involvement in the response and recovery interventions.

Key Recommendations

1. Humanitarian stakeholders, with support from the Regional GIHA, IM Working Groups and Country Operations GIHA Networks, to define and develop, in line with IASG guidelines, minimum gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring gender in humanitarian action.
2. Ensure systematic coordination with relevant partners on the production and analysis of gender data, including agreed gender-sensitive indicators in subsequent planning and revisions of the RRP, HNO, HRP, and other related plans.
3. Monitor regional reporting against Gender Sensitive Indicators in the Regional Refugee Response Plan and the Humanitarian Response Plans of Sudan and neighboring countries.
4. Advocate for inclusion of minimum gender-sensitive indicators in subsequent Refugee Response Plans and Humanitarian Response Plans.
5. Facilitate the use of technology in identifying and responding to the specific needs of women and girls and general non-women and girls-focused needs of populations affected by the conflict in Sudan.

6. Continuously analyse regional gender dimensions of the Sudan conflict and share the findings with partners for evidence-based decisions.
7. Advocate for country operations to conduct rapid gender assessments, which are updated regularly to reflect the rapidly evolving humanitarian situation in Sudan and neighboring countries.
8. Track the use of gender data and findings from gender assessments and analysis on the Sudan conflict to inform decision-making.
9. Strengthen the coordination capacities for gender in humanitarian action at the regional level, including ensuring the inclusion of Women-Led/Women's Rights Organisations in humanitarian coordination mechanisms at the regional level.
10. Provide gender technical support to Country Operations in their capacity-building support.

KEY FINDING 6

An Opportunity to Strengthen Collective Efforts in Sudanese Women's Leadership and Participation in Peace and Security and Humanitarian Interventions.

- Despite limitations imposed by insecurity, displacements and restricted movement due to active conflict in Sudan, Sudanese women have found innovative ways to engage in community, national, regional and global mediation processes.

- The conflict presents an opportunity to strengthen partnerships with Sudanese Women Leaders and with Sudan-based, Sudanese Women-Led, Women-Focused Organisations in WPS and Humanitarian Action.

Key Recommendations

1. Strengthen advocacy for peace in Sudan and neighboring South Sudan, Chad and CAR countries.
2. Conduct a mapping of ongoing and planned mediation initiatives, women's participation in the initiatives, key interlocutors, their influences, and what they are doing to ensure women participate in informing WPS efforts in the region.
3. Conduct a regional mapping of women's organisations working on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.
4. Advocate for Sudanese women's formal representation in peace and security initiatives at Regional and Global levels.
5. Strengthen efforts to intentionally engage women leaders and voices in Humanitarian Peace and Security decision-making.
6. Strengthen the capacities of women's networks to engage in mediation and peace and security dialogues at the High Level.



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