

Final Evaluation

Strengthening the Political and Peacebuilding Role of Women in Sudan's Transition

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Abbreviations

Beja Council	High Council of Beja Nazirs
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FFC	The Forces of Freedom and Change
JPA	Juba Peace Agreement
NCP	National Congress Party
MANSAM	Sudanese Women in Political and Civic Groups
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SC	Sovereign Council
Search	Search for Common Ground
SLM/A-MM	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army- Minni Minawi
SLM/A-AA	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army- Abdelwaheed Nur
SPLM/A-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army- North Faction
SuWep	Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace known
TCD	Transitional Constitutional Declaration
TLA	Transitional Legislative Assembly
TMC	Transitional Military Council

Executive Summary

Background

Sudan is burdened by more than three decades of political volatility, economic sanctions, conflict and a regime that was sometimes hostile to women's rights, development and empowerment. In 2019, Al-Bashir's regime was ousted after three decades in power, but little has changed for women in specific and for communities in general even after the arrival of the transitional government in 2019. Nonetheless, the revolution inspired women to organize and mobilize in different parts of Sudan and decentralized the women's movement as more groups were formed in the assumed peripheries in and outside Khartoum. These are counted among the many achievements of the revolution: women's increasing organizing and advocacy in spaces they were not privy to in the previous regime. This is evident in the fact that the majority of the women groups and associations interviewed in Gedarif and the Kordofans were established after the revolution because of a number of reasons: the civic space increased and this allowed women to organize, the post-revolution period saw more resources invested in civil society and women sought to grow their capacity, women's participation in the revolution impacted their self-esteem and made them feel empowered and most importantly, the revolution and the platforms it raised made women activists discover their like-minded counterparts¹.

Despite some strides of success, women's organizing and mobilization didn't translate into more substantial participation during the transitional government. This forces the women groups and associations to invest most of their energy on realizing political participation even though women's rights are compromised due to many issues such as laws and legislations as well as social norms that require being challenged. This is important to account because political participation itself is a means by which women seek platforms and positions to advance women's rights, but for this to happen, women have to be able to campaign, travel and attend meetings. Interviewees in West Kordofan and Gedarif noted that some young women leaders still struggle to travel outside state due to patriarchal family values and they have to campaign within their households as well. To summarize, efforts are much needed to empower women in private spaces as well as public spaces.

The situation deteriorated in Sudan in October 2021 when the military component in the hybrid government staged a coup that ended its partnership with the civilian component. The post-coup period was even more frustrating for women in the civil society and political groups as militarization and violence increased and this meant shrinking spaces for women's participation.

About the Project

This project entitled "Strengthening the Political and Peacebuilding role of Women in Sudan's Transition" began in 2020, which was a critical time as the transitional government was still in power and although its actions on women's participation were minimal, the civic space was friendly and the government was relatively receptive of internal and international pressure. The project leverages Search for Common Ground's (Search) experience supporting and connecting women leadership in the peripheries of Sudan, where conflict is rife. The design was informed by consultation with project partners such as Badya, MAMAN and Um Serdiba, to emphasize the relevance, conflict sensitivity and sustainable inclusion of young and established women as well as men from the the communities in South and West Kordofan, Gedarif and Khartoum states.

The project's objectives were:

- Young women leaders have increased capacity and confidence to lead efforts to advance peace and security at the community level.
- Women's political engagement and advocacy during the transition are strengthened.
- Women's roles and contribution as leaders are amplified and accepted at the local, national, and international levels.

¹ "At the dawn of Post-Revolution Sudan A Reflection on the dynamics of the women's movement". 24 May 2023. SIHA Network. <https://issuu.com/halayassin/docs/at_the_dawn_of_post-revolution_sudan_web>

Through capacity and confidence building of diverse women leaders, this project empowered women to take on leadership roles in the peace, security, and political processes in Sudan. By connecting these women to young men, identified as male champions, this project set off to shift social norms around the inclusion of women and the positive benefits of collaboration between women and men. Finally, this project sought to shift broader community social norms through media programming to amplify and highlight successful women's leadership, collaboration, and inclusion. The full list of activities can be found in Annex III.

This project supported the implementation of an action plan that directly contributed to achieving UNSCR 1325. Similarly, this project is aligned with, and integrates key principles of UNSCR 2250, UNSCR 2419, and UNSCR 2535, namely on the inclusion of youth in implementing peace agreements and the importance of protecting the civic space of young people, thereby ensuring their voices and actions are recognized.

Methodology

Andariya undertook the final evaluation of the project "Strengthening the Political and Peacebuilding Role of Women in Sudan's Transition", which aims at identifying the key changes in values, sentiments, skills, knowledge, and behavior (empowerment, collaboration, engagement) brought about by the activities implemented in the target communities in the areas of leadership, conflict transformation, peace and security and UNSCR 1325 and 2250, from the onset to the end of the project's timeline.

This end-line evaluation was based on OECD-DAC criteria that inform the program's relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The key objectives of the study were to:

1. Measure the extent to which the project achieved its planned goal and outcomes by establishing end line values of key indicators.
2. Assess the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, as they apply to this project
3. Define the main recommendations and lessons learned for future programs and assess the intervention's sustainability.

Andariya used a mixed-method study design to ensure the data collected is sufficient and representative for validation and triangulation in the target geographic locations: Gedarif, West Kordofan, South Kordofan and Khartoum. The project commenced with a desk review and analysis of programme and project documents, interim reports, previous evaluations, logframe, the M&E plan, baseline study, etc. Then, the contextualization of the evaluation criteria and questions was completed to construct the evaluation matrix. The endline survey, FGDs and KIIs were developed, translated and tested before deployment on Kobo. Finally, field visits and data collection on program and project indicators commenced, for comparison with baseline and monitoring data in accordance with the ADA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Programmes and Projects, the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria and the OECD/DAC Ethical Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance. A total of 27 KIIs were carried out with women leaders, young women, search and partners, male champions and community members. Six total FGDs were held, one for men and women in each of the states of Gedarif, West and South Kordofan. Finally, an endline project survey was carried out, garnering a total of 332 responses collected from the 3 target states.

Limitations

The evaluation faced two major limitations:

- Travel outside major urban cities: the evaluation would have benefited from traveling to different project sites to interview different constituencies, such as women farmers in Gedaref, and travel to different towns in the Kordofans.
- The project's footprint in Khartoum was less tangible from the partners' perspective and participants were mostly drawn from women and young women from the three project states. This led to the methodology in Khartoum not following the same format i.e. only KIIs were conducted in Khartoum and key target individuals were not available (Dr. Belquis), thus the data is narrower for analysis and conclusion than it is in other locations.

Key findings

The endline assessment has shown that the project was successful in executing almost all planned activities, leading to recorded changes in the way young and expert women collaborate on peace and security initiatives, engage with male champions and demand tangible changes from the community and its leaders. Through the skills and opportunities of this project, women have gained a seat at the table in the various states covered. Nonetheless, one challenge many continued mentioning throughout our field work is that they now have seats, but no microphones; men retain the highest levels of authority in all peace and security committees and groups, allowing women the seats and the voice but no concrete influence over the course of actions. One striking success story comes from Gedarif, where in the village of Bilel, a committee for water services was dominated by men and women did not get a seat on the table. The water issues of the community were not properly addressed, so after capacity building and engagement through the project, women in the village took initiative through organized activities and were able to create dykes effectively, adding an important safety measure for the vulnerable community. Although the initiative is great and was impactful, the inability of women and men to work collaboratively while retaining equal rights in decision making is a disconnect that will not lead to sustainable lasting peace. A young health officer and member of Gedarif Women for Peace network said “I took training in leadership and mentoring as part of this project and it added so much to my self esteem. As part of the Gedarif Women for Peace network we took part in many advocacy programs about the UNSC and delivered it to women in Gedarif and nearby localities”. Self-esteem was mentioned a few times, as the project participants mentioned simple anecdotes from everyday interactions where they were able to influence decisions by young women to continue education instead of marrying under the legal aid, as recounted by the health officer above.

● Relevance

The project interventions were relevant to the project objectives as per the understanding of the partner organizations and their constituencies and this is due to constant follow-up, the participatory approach to the project plan of action and activities log as well as the joint (refresher) meetings conducted to ensure that all parties are on the same page. The primary target group of the project, that is young women leaders, was partially met, yet did not include younger women university students and generally younger women under 35 years of age. The gaps when it comes to inclusion and participation are due to the social and political dynamics in the different cities. Women in general and especially outside Khartoum tend to be more politically active as they get older and this is done through marriage (which gives them more spaces to move) and also through economic empowerment (once they make money to support themselves) and for this reason, most workshops, initiatives and associations are led by women who are over 30 and mostly over 40. As evidenced below through interviews, young women student activism is mostly focused inside universities (perceived as a safe space for families to allow their girls to mingle with the outside world) and this is an opportunity for inclusion of this younger and highly motivated demographic.

● Effectiveness

The project did bridge the gap between women activists and leaders with their grassroots counterparts whether women farmers in Gedarif, traditional producers in West Kordofan and women in the informal sector and displaced communities in South Kordofan. The health officer from Gedarif noted that there is more acceptance of these partnerships after the revolution, and women activists who took an active role learned a lot from these experiences to push back on male leaders. The project’s effective awareness raising, empowerment and engagement activities contributed significantly to women approaching unfamiliar spaces and demanding their right of inclusion and participation. The health officer added “there is now more acceptance, even if it’s little, but it’s improving and leaders are accepting even young women’s approach to working and setting goals”.

However, this link has yet to materialize into a real partnership that ensures that women leaders are able to articulate the concerns and priorities of more marginalized women while also giving them more platforms to speak with their own voice. One positive step in Gedarif is that political parties began inducting women and creating high ranking roles for women.

It is too early to understand how the project contributed to increasing acceptance and trust in young women's leadership at the community level because it is not enough to get positive feedback from the community without having solid evidence over a considerable period of time and in different locations and not just among political elites. This can't be understood now because the environment is still not entirely conducive for women's participation in peace and security. Nonetheless, the examples mentioned above all show great empowerment by this project's workshops, activities and engagements. This empowerment is allowing women to gain foot in very exclusive spaces traditionally led by men. Whether women are able to effect change is the long term expectation given a conducive environment and an acceleration of the positive steps taken by community leaders and women groups.

- **Impact**

Many new initiatives were created that gave young women tangible and visible participation in community interventions. The sentiments of the young women in WK were that yes, there is change due to the increased capacity and linkages created by the project, but impact needs a longer timeframe to enable initiatives to create meaningful change, and not lose sight of the ultimate required result of the initiatives. One of the impacts of the project is that women are now proactive and participating in Joudias, which are community conflict resolution forums, where they mediate for peace and reconciliation between opposing community members. Participants in the KII mentioned a market for armed movements that was created by a woman in the community. She advocated for armed movements in the area to still shop in the same common area with the rule of going in without their arms. Furthermore, she negotiated with the movements to ensure accountability to any conflict that arises in the market to be held among them without harming the market's other shoppers.

- **Sustainability**

The main sustainable issue is the fact you have large groups of women who are trained and have vested interest in carrying through campaigning for political participation. To achieve long term sustainability requires intervention at three levels, firstly, the networks need continued capacity-building as well as more presence on the ground (physical space and equipment) and access to long-term core funding and this is the only way to eventually become organic networks that have support within their communities and are able to have their own business development plans (ie: investments that generate revenue to cover the main expenses of the networks). The challenge with this approach lies in the fact that its impact is contingent upon the stability of the country and the absence of persistent impoverishment within the community. If the situation continues to deteriorate, achieving sustainability will become exceedingly challenging unless upcoming projects incorporate microfinance elements into their networks.

Recommendations

- 1) Assess the capacity of the partner organizations to develop their capacity in line with critical needs.
- 2) Integrate social media listening into future projects working on women's empowerment (talkwalker and meltwater could be good options).
- 3) Consider collaborations with social media pages and outlets to promote the project and this could be through paid advertisement or joint campaigns. This requires mapping the social media pages that resonate with the communities.
- 4) More targeted capacity-building in network and coalition-building as well as financial and technical support to the established networks.
- 5) Rethink the impact of state-based radio stations. Also consider engaging more popular radios and requesting evidence of engagement on certain topics at a minimum level.
- 6) Strengthen women's networks for longer term sustainability
- 7) Walk the talk

Background Information

Sudan bears the weight of three decades marred by political corruption, economic sanctions, conflict, and a dictatorial regime that vehemently opposed women's rights, development, and empowerment. In 2019, Al-Bashir's regime was overthrown after a thirty-year reign, yet little has changed for women in particular and communities in general, even with the advent of the transitional government. Led by Dr. Abdullah Hamdok, the transitional government faced numerous challenges, including recurring fatal floods, the COVID-19 crisis, the legacy of Al-Bashir's regime, and the complex hybrid government in the form of the joint military-civil Sovereign Council². This government assumed power during a time of deep economic turmoil, with rising poverty levels, rampant social injustice, and limited access to basic services for the majority of the population.

In the post-revolution period, Sudan witnessed heightened levels of insecurity and tribal conflicts across most of its 17 states, resulting in widespread displacement, primarily affecting women and children³. Importantly, women faced a backlash as violence against them escalated, despite their instrumental role as the backbone and main supporters of the revolution⁴. Unfortunately, this did not translate into tangible women's empowerment through robust legislation or increased representation in decision-making positions during the transitional government's 2.5-year rule. To improve the present and future of women, stakeholders must heavily invest in enhancing their skills, knowledge, confidence, community awareness, and support their effective participation in key governance, peacebuilding, security, and community development initiatives.

Since the 1920s, Sudanese women have been advocating for their rights both within and outside the capital city⁵. In 1952, the Sudanese Women's Union, the largest women's organization, was established, but it faced persecution under several military dictatorships⁶. From the 1950s to the 1980s, seizing power in Sudan was predominantly achieved through coups d'état, effectively stunting the organic growth of civil society, including women-led groups, and forcing them into a constant state of flight⁷. During the early years of Al-Bashir's regime, civil society was crushed, torture chambers were utilized, and the crackdown was brutal. However, women continued to organize and lead protests against the forced conscription of their sons into the military in the mid-1990s⁸. They also took the Khartoum government to court in 2000 to challenge the ban on women from certain professions⁹. Much of the activism was primarily political, with women organized into groups affiliated with political parties such as the Umma party women's group and the women's caucus in the National Democratic Alliance¹⁰.

The conflicts in Sudan inspired activist women and non-political women alike to mobilize and form various groups, such as SuWep, which brought together activists from Sudan and South Sudan working on peacebuilding. Coordinating bodies and groups focused on specific issues also emerged, including the General Multipurpose Cooperative Union, which unites women in the informal sector and advocates for their rights, and the Women for Peace and Security group, comprising organizations and individuals from conflict areas, operating within the framework of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325¹¹.

² Modber MAKA, Ahmadi A, Mogessie YG, Ibrahim YMES, Adebisi YA, Lucero-Prisno DE 3rd. Dam if You Do, Dam if You Don't: Politics and Floods in the Shadow of COVID-19 in Sudan. *Health Secur.* 2021 Mar-Apr;19(2):232-234. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8060708/>>

³ "Sudan: At least 220 killed in tribal fighting". DW. 23 October 2022. <<https://rb.gy/syzx2>>

⁴ Tønnessen, L., & Al-Nagar, S. (2023). Women, Revolution, and Backlash: Igniting Feminist Mobilization in Sudan. *Politics & Gender*, 1-6.

⁵ (Al Amin 2001:2) (Mahmoud 1995: 260)

⁶ (Mahmoud 1995: 260-261)

⁷ (Tønnessen 2010) Al-Amin (2001)

⁸ NRC Handelsblad (Dutch newspaper), 4 June 1998.

⁹ "Court suspends Decision to Bar Women from Some Jobs" PANAPress. 9 Sept 2000 <<https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/court-suspends-decision-bar-women-some-jobs>>

¹⁰ Abbas, Reem. "We have been quiet for so long: Sudanese women's coalitions in post-revolution Sudan." *Safer World*. September 2022. <<https://shorturl.at/fpwA1>>

¹¹ Ibid.

Women in Sudan have faced significant obstacles in political participation due to rigid gender-biased social norms and traditions. In sectors predominantly dominated by men, such as politics and civic engagement, women are seldom present in decision-making circles or allowed meaningful participation¹². Their underrepresentation stems from a combination of social norms, lack of confidence, and limited capacity to engage in different leadership roles. The political landscape, which is largely controlled by armed men, remains inaccessible to women. Additionally, women have limited access to capacity-building opportunities, economic resources, and platforms that facilitate political participation and civic engagement¹³. The revolution inspired women to organize and mobilize in various parts of Sudan, decentralizing the women's movement as new groups formed, including the Kandakat of the South Belt, which brings together women activists from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the southern part of Khartoum, and the Women in Sudanese Civic and Political Groups (MANSAM), which originated in Khartoum but has effective branches in South Kordofan, Al-Jazeera, and South Darfur¹⁴.

As previously mentioned, women's organization and mobilization did not result in substantial increases in participation during the transitional government. The situation took a turn for the worse in October 2021 when the military component of the hybrid government decided to rule independently and dissolved its partnership with the civilian component through a military coup. The post-coup period proved even more challenging for women in civil society and political groups as militarization and violence escalated, further limiting spaces for women's participation. During this time, various forms of violence against women, including sexual violence against protestors and women activists, as well as street violence, hindered women's movement and their ability to access gatherings that would contribute to their social and political capital¹⁵.

The project titled "Strengthening the Political and Peacebuilding Role of Women in Sudan's Transition" is developed against this backdrop, with the aim of promoting and enhancing women's political participation by strengthening the supporting infrastructure. This involves empowering women and male champions, fostering the presence of community-based organizations (CBOs), and creating networking opportunities within and across regions. The project was initiated in 2020, a critical period during the transitional government's tenure. Although the government's actions towards women's participation were limited, there was a relatively open civic space, and the government showed some responsiveness to internal and international pressures. However, the project encountered increased challenges in the post-coup period, marked by restricted access and heightened violence following the military coup of 2021. Despite the challenging and evolving context, the project persevered and managed to create a meaningful impact on the targeted groups. By adapting its strategies and approaches to accommodate the shifting landscape, the project successfully navigated the obstacles posed by restricted access and increased violence following the military coup of 2021.

¹² Abbas, Reem (2023). "Men Fighting, Women Breaking-up: Sudanese Women's Movements, the Wing of the Patriarch?" 13 April 2023. African Arguments<<https://africanarguments.org/2023/04/men-fighting-women-breaking-up-sudanese-womens-movements-the-wing-of-the-patriarch/>>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Abbas, Reem. "We have been quiet for so long: Sudanese women's coalitions in post-revolution Sudan." Safer World. September 2022. <<https://shorturl.at/fpWA1> >

¹⁵ Salih, Zeinab. Protests in Sudan after alleged gang-rape of young woman by security forces. The Guardian. 16 March 2022. <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/16/protests-in-sudan-after-alleged-gang-rape-of-young-woman-by-security-forces>>

Methodology

The project's theory of change reads as follows:

"The theory of change (ToC) that underpins this project is that, to improve Sudan's peace and political processes and contribute to the acceptance of inclusivity among communities and government representatives, emerging young women and established women leaders will be connected to one another in South Kordofan, West Kordofan, and Gedaref, and avenues for empowerment, feedback, and collaboration through intersectional trust building and dialogue between communities in those peripheral states and national decision makers will be broadly amplified."

The evaluation aimed at identifying the key changes in values, sentiments, skills, knowledge, and behavior (empowerment, collaboration, engagement) brought about by the activities implemented in the target communities in the areas of leadership, conflict transformation, peace and security and UNSCR 1325 and 2250, from the onset to the end of the project's timeline. The evaluation identified the evidence where women were able to apply the skills gained through this project and apply it in a plethora of ways that demonstrate key changes in their home communities. Furthermore, the evaluation explored how the project partners, leaders and communities mitigated the high levels of political volatility in their communities in specific, to continue to garner results in raising awareness about women's participation, playing active leadership roles and participating in the civic space and as part of local governance structures.

Objectives

This end-line evaluation is based on OECD-DAC criteria that inform program relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and the broad key objectives of the study are:

1. Measure the extent to which the project achieved its planned goal and outcomes by establishing end line values of key indicators.
2. Assess the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, as they apply to this project.
3. Define the main recommendations and lessons learned for future programs and assess the intervention's sustainability.

Evaluation Design

We used a mixed-method study design to ensure the data collected is sufficient and representative for validation and triangulation. The geographic locations of the study were: Gedarif, West Kordofan, South Kordofan and Khartoum

The methodology included:

- Desk review and analysis of programme and project documents, interim reports, previous evaluations, logframe, the M&E plan, baseline study, etc.
- Contextualizing the evaluation criteria and questions to construct the evaluation matrix.
- Translating and testing the end-line survey questions (FGDs, KIIs and survey).

Data collection on programme and project indicators for comparison with baseline and monitoring data in accordance with the ADA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Programmes and Projects, the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria and the OECD/DAC Ethical Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance.

- Field visits to evaluate reported achievements and results with the project's three local partners:

Gedarif: Human Security Initiative (MAMAN)

West Kordofan: Badya Centre for Integrated Development Services (Badya)

South Kordofan: Um Serdiba Organization for Development (Um Serdiba)

- Key Informant Interviews and focus group discussions with project stakeholders and representatives, local partner organizations
- 2 FGDs in each state, one a mixed women's group (old and young) and another a mixed men's group of 10-15 participants. Selection took into consideration age, ethnic and social-class diversity.
- KIIs targeted women leaders, young women, community members and journalists trained in Khartoum as well as Search and other partners and stakeholders in the project.
- Outcome harvesting with participants.

The evaluation focused on building findings and evidence on several issues or components:

- Representation- examining the diversity within the project when it comes to different generations, different communities and different social settings. It also looked at the women's groups and their ability to be inclusive notwithstanding the political and ethnic polarization. In this regard, established women networks are able to be inclusive of younger women and support their participation in political and public spheres.
- Political participation- more young and established women are part of the political and peace-building negotiations and processes in the different states, and their increased participation is measurable with specific examples demonstrating confidence and agency of community wide issues, and opportunities to influence and impact these issues at the local, national or international level.
- Understanding of the women, peace and security agenda - women leaders are better understanding of the WPS agenda and are able to take part in local and national-level gatherings on the issue.
- Men's engagement- Trying to understand how effective men's engagement has been and locate concrete examples of influencing policy or situations that improves the situation of women.

Data analysis and reporting to produce a report and presentation of key findings and recommendations.

Data Collection

Sampling methods and sample sizes in SK, WK, Khartoum and Gedarif.

The table below describes the sampling approach and weights of every target demographic. The project partners were engaged to aid in the adequate representation of each group in the methodologies used in this evaluation.

	South Kordofan	West Kordofan	Gedarif	Khartoum
Focus Group Discussions (Females)	14	14	15	0
Focus Group Discussions (Males)	12	12 actual	12	0
Key Informant Interviews: Women Leaders, Young women, Search and Partners, Community members and Journalists for Khartoum	9	5	8	5
Surveys:	34	45	37	0
Women Leaders	35	36	31	0
Young women	36	41	37	0
Community members				

Limitations

The evaluation faced two major limitations:

- Travel outside major urban cities: the evaluation would have benefited from traveling to different project sites to interview different constituencies such as women farmers in Gedaref and travel to different towns in the Kordofans. The timeframe and security challenges in the target regions prevented this scenario from occurring.
- Khartoum: Because the partners' engagement in Khartoum was not as comprehensive as in the other states, hence participants' recollection of the project and provision of valuable feedback were challenging to obtain. Furthermore, engagement with some key Khartoum based stakeholders (Dr. Belquis Bedri) was not possible due to scheduling issues with the interviewee. This is a limitation because Khartoum has the largest population and most of the women leaders are based there, having a large footprint in Khartoum allows for a larger scale project and also builds an infrastructure that allows national coordination between women leaders.

Findings

The endline assessment compared the baseline findings and targets to examine progress made through the various project activities. Overall, the project was successful in executing almost all planned activities, leading to recorded changes in the way young and expert women collaborate on peace and security initiatives, engage with male champions and demand tangible changes from the community and its leaders.

Some notable challenges of concern to this project's implementation include the military coup of October 2021, which disadvantaged some activities as well as some target locations of the project. As a result, one outcome fell behind the target, namely:

"1.b. % of targeted young women who report having opportunities to influence peace and security."

The indicator's target was 75% and commenced with a baseline of 50%. Nonetheless, the results were only 59% at the endline point. Participants noted that they were "taught how to disseminate these ideas to the community and the opportunity is that they can enter new experiences and roles in the community and be part of the advisory of civil society" in general (Young woman, Khartoum). Participants noted that due to the post-coup situation in Sudan and the inability to be meaningfully involved as civil society in peace and security, they were not able to fully demonstrate their learnings in opportunities that were initially available pre-coup and were postponed or canceled after the coup. Moreover, the project can't operate in a parallel world as in general, the political marketplace (De Waal, 2019) doesn't facilitate women's participation and this translates into lower numbers of women in political parties, in high-level political positions and in tribal or community leadership. For this reason, women have lower participation opportunities in peace and security, as the agendas are traditionally managed by men. When opportunities are presented by international organizations and mediators, they face multiple hurdles to include enough women because they are not seen by male actors- who dominate these settings- as key actors in political and peace processes. Furthermore, social norms in Sudan limit women's movement and public participation, which is required in security and peace work which occurs both within local and international borders. Nonetheless, some saw other activities under this project as the actual opportunities that prepared them for involvement in peace and security in Sudan.

Having an opportunity to participate doesn't mean that women will not continue facing problems, one respondent explained that she came under fire as different women groups felt that she didn't represent them enough or that some of their recommendations were not taken into consideration, "I am on the phone the whole day trying to find common ground and ensure that the Eastern Sudan group is able to reconcile differences, it is not an easy task, but I have to continue standing my ground" she added. Moreover, she had to deal with political as well as ethnic tensions. In addition to the political differences that were brought to the surface through her speech, she also found her discriminated against. "Some men didn't like that I, as someone from Gedarif, represented the East."

One of the highest endline findings was for the indicator:

1.c. % of community members who believe that women can contribute positively to peace and security.

In Gedarif, the focus group discussion with males revealed that men highly believe women were actively contributing to the peace and security of the state. The participants noted that the project contributed to expanding the women's networks and groups to enable them to advocate for peace as well as other key issues such as education and human rights. Adding that the networks successfully started peacebuilding initiatives to address tribal or ethnic conflicts over lands, social issues and resources. The networks are also actively working to promote economic and social empowerment for women, such as the work with farmers in Gedarif and the work on soap-making in South Kordofan and this is part of building societal structures to ensure women's long-term participation in peace and security issues.

In Gedarif, West Kordofan and in South Kordofan, the male FGDs connected women's contribution to peace and security with the inability of men to bring tribal conflicts under control due to the overall militarized masculinities and inability to make compromises for the general good. For example, a lawyer in Gedarif said that "women play a role in instigating as well as putting off conflict. We had a disagreement between two ethnic groups in Gedarif recently and the women from one of the groups agreed to not put salt or sugar in the food and when the men asked they told them, that the other tribe has the salt and sugar and unless they get revenge for the killing of their young men, they will not cook well-seasoned food. However, we have also seen women stopping conflict or at least limiting it on many occasions in Gedarif. In fact, I think the community is more receptive now because they think that men have failed to solve conflicts at the local level and the community level.

The full indicator table is in Annex IV and the activities list in Annex II.

Indicator	Baseline Findings	Target	Endline Findings
Outcome 1: Young women leaders have increased capacity and confidence to lead efforts to advance peace and security at the community level.			
1.a. % of targeted young women who report feeling prepared to speak and lead on peace and security.	23.12%	48%	66%
1.b. % of targeted young women who report having opportunities to influence peace and security.	50%	75%	59%
1.c. % of community members who believe that women can contribute positively to peace and security.	50%	70%	96%
Outcome 2: Women's political engagement and advocacy during the transition are strengthened.			
2.a. % targeted women who believe that they can make a positive difference on peace and security issues in their communities.	66.7%	80%	95%
2.b. % of community members who believe women are key actors in political processes and advocacy in their communities.	33.5%	59%	94%
2.c. % of targeted women who report having opportunities to influence political processes and	64.2%	80%	83%

policy decisions in Sudan (and can provide at least 1 example).			
Outcome 3: Women’s roles and contribution as leaders are amplified and accepted at the local, national, and international levels.			
3.a. of targeted women who feel their contribution is recognized in peace, security, and political processes.	0	60%	95%
3.c. % of community members who agree or strongly agree with the statement “women are capable of contributing and leading on peace and security”	0	75%	98%

Key Objective 1: Young women leaders have increased capacity and confidence to lead efforts to advance peace and security at the community level.

The definition of youth remains relative in the context of the different states in Sudan because in general, women mobilizing in a more organized way happens later in life due to social and economic dynamics in Sudan- especially outside the center. Interviewees in Gedaref and the Kordofans agreed that older women (most probably married women above 40, which gives them more prestige and acceptance in the society) have a much larger space when it comes to movement and self-expression¹⁶. Younger women are burdened by domestic responsibilities and all the burden of childcare falls on them especially if they don’t have financial resources, while young unmarried women have less opportunities to move because social norms dictate that political participation and taking part in political events impacts their chances in getting married especially if they are subjected to detention as this has a heavy stigma.

The 2019 revolution did engage many younger women (university students) in mobilization and women’s work¹⁷. This was evident in Gedaref and West Kordofan where there are active youth in women’s groups and networks. However, as the conversations and activities that are connected to awareness work are now outside the university spaces, there are less young women in political spaces. Although there are young women leaders that were trained and have increased capacity, the project did not include an advocacy component to challenge the social dynamics that disempower young women in the public arena¹⁸. For example, sometimes women’s dis-empowerment is tied to the location and time of the meeting as most women have curfews and men are able to meet at late hours (sometimes intentionally to alienate women) and they also meet at locations that could be unacceptable for women especially younger women (ie: houses of single men, traditional cafes and clubs that are male-dominated)¹⁹.

The women in general do have increased capacity and confidence and this is evident in a number of activities conducted. In mid-2022, conflict broke out in the Blue Nile region and the women's networks in Gedaref held an event in solidarity with the communities there and used this activity to share peace messages²⁰. This event was held at a grassroots level, but it also helped introduce the young women to the community as peace-makers. It also had a value which is connecting women across the country and this is critical to creating women leaders who are less local and more national.

¹⁶ Women’s FGD in West Kordofan.

¹⁷ “Tønnessen, Liv (2020)Sudanese women’s revolution for freedom, dignity and justice continues” Chrs Michelsen Institue. <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/7355-sudanese-womens-revolution-for-freedom-dignity-and-justice-continues>>

¹⁸ Women’s FGD in Gedarif.

¹⁹ Interview with Abdelmarouf Mohamed, a champion,Gedarif, 22 March 2023

²⁰ Interview with Ashwag Mohamed Ahmed, Gedarif,22 March 2023.

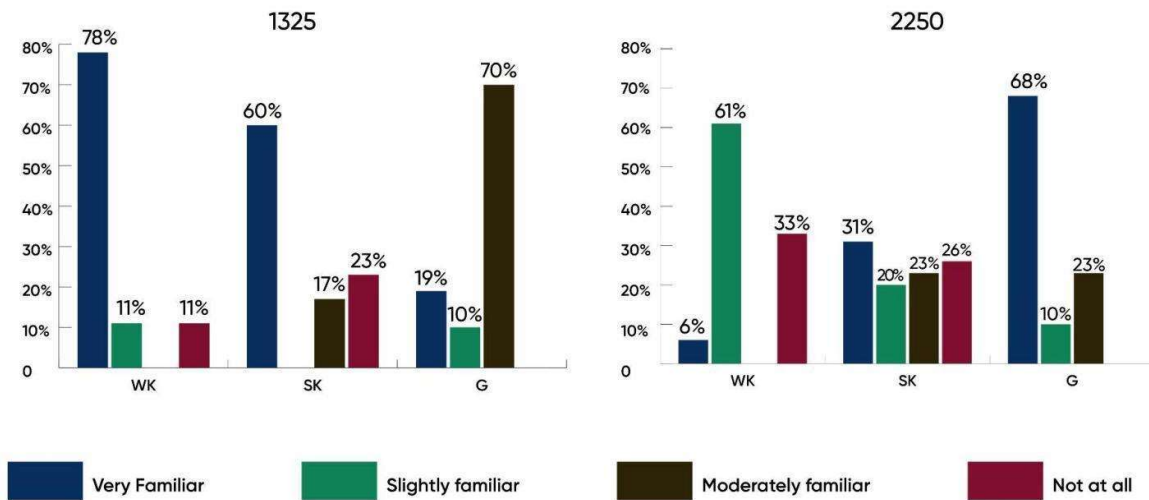


Figure of the level of familiarity of trained young women with knowledge of concepts related to leadership, conflict transformation, UNSCR 1325 and 2250

Overall, 80% of trained young women demonstrated increased knowledge of concepts related to leadership, conflict transformation, UNSCR 1325 and 2250 in this endline evaluation. Relatedly, 66% of surveyed young women reported feeling prepared to speak and lead on peace and security, a three fold increase from the baseline of 23.12%. A young trainee described the dynamism of the project activities as having led to the increase in young women’s confidence in themselves and their leadership capabilities. She noted “the workshop itself was an opportunity to benefit and execute some of the learnings of the workshop. It also enabled us to see ourselves as artists in creating art that promotes peace”.

Young women in Gedarif demonstrated the highest familiarity with concepts related to leadership, conflict transformation, UNSCR 1325 and 2250 as highlighted in the figure above. One KII participant in Gedarif attributed this to the project’s activity whereas “an hour was dedicated to radio programming about women’s issues and in specific UNSCR 1325 and 2250 and women’s participation. Most call-ins were from women but men also called in and supported these resolutions and highlighted collaboration. These shows created a hot debate”. Varying levels of familiarity within the young women’s group in South and West Kordofan were uncovered through the survey. Moreover, in South Kordofan, the women leaders had very little to zero knowledge on UNSCR 1325 which is an entrypoint to advocate and even pressure political parties and authorities for more spaces for women to sit at the table during peace talks and all negotiations. This could be due to the state being very far and isolated which makes it an unlikely location for workshops, as well as low connectivity which makes it difficult to take part in webinars, download resources and attend virtual sessions. Maybe the participants also needed more explanation on what entails UNSCR 1325 as maybe they have heard of its components.

R.1.1 % of targeted young women who report feeling prepared to speak and lead on peace and security.

Women participants, in general, did report feeling more prepared to speak and take on roles to influence peace and security in their community. This was evident in West Kordofan, for example, when women who were trained in the project held talks with the “reconciliation committee” responsible for resolving the tribal conflicts and land issues in the area. Historically, women were not part of this committee or similar local conflict-resolution efforts, but after this

project launched, they gained the necessary skills and confidence and were able to network across women's groups. Consequently, they approached the committee and asked for their right to become part of this peace-making effort. Until now, they have not been invited to take part in any meetings, but they continue to push for participation as opposed to representation.

R.1.2 % of targeted young women who report having opportunities to influence peace and security.

In retrospect, the project outcomes are interlinked with the path of the political and peace processes in Sudan and because many activities were implemented in the period after the coup, the opportunities to influence and take part in the overall processes were scarce. However, some participants from the project were involved in the ongoing political process. Participants from Gedarif, South and West Kordofan took part in different workshops such as the transitional justice workshop (at the regional and at the national levels) and the Eastern Sudan workshop. In fact, the person selected to share the recommendations or outcomes from the Eastern Sudan workshop was a young woman from Gedarif, and she was selected based on merit (her solid skills and her recognized contribution to the workshop).

At the core of young women's leadership is their ability to exchange lessons and collaborate with established women leaders in their communities. Through the various activities of this project, 71% of young women reported working with established women leaders on peace and security in the past six months. Nonetheless, 96% of targeted women leaders reported to have engaged in some way with young leaders but not all had a chance to work together on common agenda items.

A woman leader, who works at the unit for combating VAW in Gedarif, said that she became more popular among her students as a result of the project. She added "I have been coming across more young women through the project and I also reflect what I've learned to my female students and it has been very positive, more young women are interested to learn about the work and they continue to ask me to invite them to workshops. I feel that I can positively influence them as a mentor."

In Gedarif, there is more inclusion of women with disabilities. On this issue, a youth disability activist said that "this project was very inclusive, we continued to be integrated into the project activities and we were able to include women with disabilities in the activities and also bring our own concerns to the table." For her and many other women, there is a layer of invisibility that is now being removed.

R.1.3 % of community members who believe that women can contribute positively to peace and security.

Our evaluation found that a whopping 96% of respondents believe that women can contribute positively to peace and security. Community members are more open to women taking part in peace efforts and there are several examples. In Al-Gedarif, women were invited to take part in resolving the conflict that happened in Al-Homyrah, while in West Kordofan, the community was very supportive of women's engagement in the recent conflict in Al-Fula through the "Al-Fula fits/ accommodate everyone" which is an initiative that was started and spearheaded by the Women's Voices network, one of the partner networks in West Kordofan state. The community supported the initiative through taking part in its activities and the initiative was also given several platforms to operate from; such as the youth club in town.

Key Objective 2: Women's political engagement and advocacy during the transition are strengthened.

In general, although the civic space faced limitations due to the legacy of Al-Bashir's government as well as the 2021 coup, women were still able to assert themselves through participation mainly in the local, but also at the national level. The main issue facing women is the fact that limited seats are available for women at the table and all women groups have to compete for these seats even though men groups are able to take part through different levels of participation due to political affiliations. This is because men are not seen as men, but as representatives of different political entities, while women are seen as a sector such as IDPs, refugees etc. and this warrants them basic participation. This makes for structural challenges that prohibit women from achieving equality in political participation in the short-term, but in the short-term, women networks are able to maneuver this space by mobilizing

on common grounds and figuring out how to align their interests, and this is how they were able to capture critical moments of engagement such as the now-defunct political process that ended in April 2023.

R.2.1 % targeted women who believe that they can make a positive difference on peace and security issues in their communities.

Women participants reported an increasing role as a result of capacity-building as well as networking with other women groups. The women who were invited to the workshops and high-level meetings were also given better opportunities in the workshops. For example, a participant from West Kordofan was invited to give the opening remarks in a workshop on conflict resolution that was held by tribal and community leaders on the recent tribal violence in the state. In a society that is very patriarchal, this was seen by her as a recognition by men and especially traditional leaders of the capacity of women.

Of the 95% of women surveyed who believe that women can now make a positive difference on peace and security issues in their communities, a young woman from Gedarif who received capacity building and took part in many inter-generational engagements expressed her belief in women making a difference in their societies, stating: “I believe women from Gedarif may have opportunities through networking. I worked in civil society for a while, but after the networks and connections created at the organization, I got to know women who can lead the political process competently”. The women directly refer to the activities highlighted above as the catalyst for their renewed belief as many activities highlighted other women leaders’ success stories and other enabled women to practice peace and security work and gain confidence in the process.

R.2.2 % of community members who believe women are key actors in political processes and advocacy in their communities.

Ninety four percent (94%) of surveyed community members believe that women should be key actors in political and peace processes, a significant jump from the baseline result of 33.5%. Nonetheless, their support does not necessarily translate to women gaining key positions in the political processes in their communities due to the strict political marketplace. However, there are entry points by community members and especially by leaders who are mostly men who have political influence.

There are examples from community members and leaders who began carving out more roles for women’s participation. In South Kordofan, a tribal leader began engaging more women to work on peace and began working in the community and through schools. The main change that was brought by this is to ensure that women are present in the School Guidance committee.

In Gedarif, the community lauded efforts by women during a communal livestock conflict in Hamraa area. The efforts by women were notable in mitigating the conflict as they directly engaged with other women from opposing factions and energetically proved that women have power to accomplish peace between communities. One FGD participant in Gedarif added: “women took part in the education conference in the Northern rural area and were at the forefront of policy discussions due to the important role women’s education plays in ensuring challengers such as child brides end. As a result they reopened a secondary school in the same area that was closed due to child brides leaving school before high school.” Moreover, one of the most celebrated women networks is the Women’s Coalition for Peacebuilding, which famously boasts young and more experienced women, from different religions, striving for peace building.

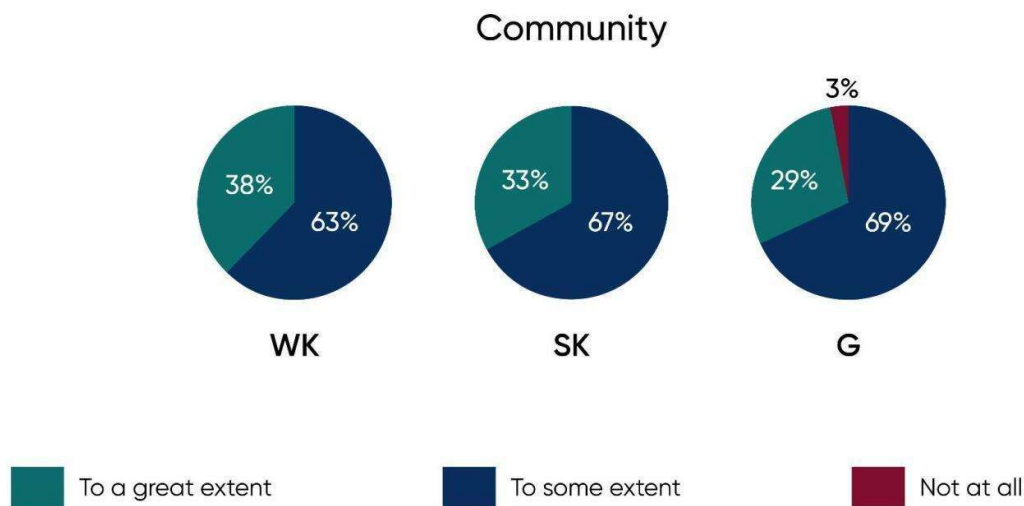


Figure demonstrating the extent to which community members feel they have opportunities to contribute feedback to peace processes.

In Gedarif, the community commended the direct engagement with women who are now more visible and vocal in community discussion forums.

R.2.3 % of targeted women who report having opportunities to influence political processes and policy decisions in Sudan (and can provide at least 1 example).

With 83% of respondents reporting having the opportunities to influence political processes and policy decisions, significant progress was made in this category (a jump from 64.2%). Forty five percent (45%) of young women think they have these opportunities to a great extent, with the lowest being in West Kordofan (28%) and highest in South Kordofan (63%). Similarly, 46% of women leaders agree with the presence of opportunities to a great extent, with the highest being in West Kordofan (80%) and the lowest in South Kordofan (24%). There are two main reasons behind the low numbers of South Kordofan. 1) The state is severely isolated and impoverished due to years of conflict and this makes it difficult for women there to be part of national-level political participation. 2) There is heavy polarization because the SPLM-N has a large constituency there and this movement has been inactive in civil politics for a long time (ie: they refused to take part in the transitional government).

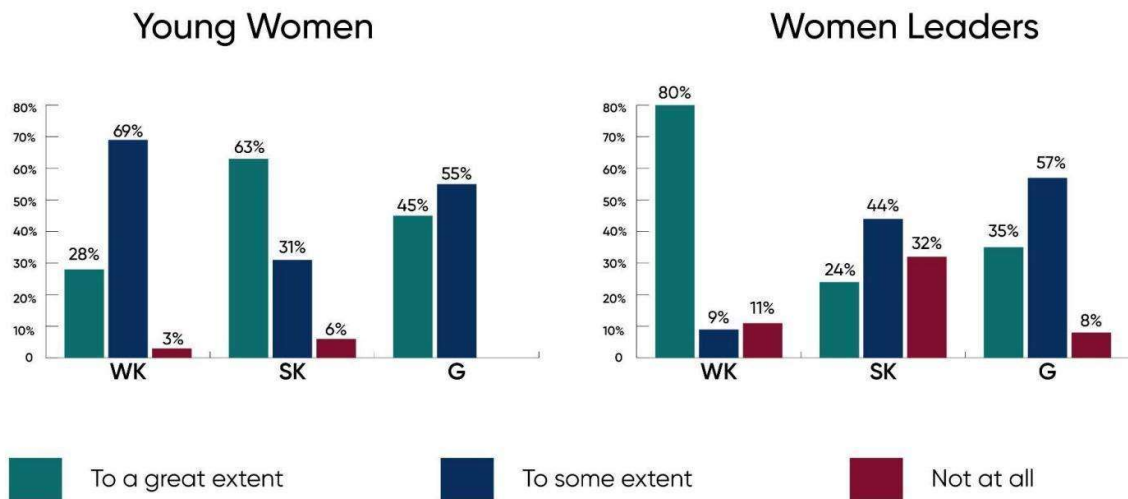


Figure showcasing the percentage of young women and women leaders in each state who report having opportunities to influence political processes and policy decisions in Sudan.

Interviewees in Gedarif and West Kordofan were able to provide an example to prove their participation in political processes and policy decisions and they trace this to their improved ability to understand and articulate the different issues at stake, as well as their ability to network with larger groups and networks as a result of the project activities. Women interviewees from all states took part in regional and national level workshops that are connected to the ongoing political process.

Key Objective 3: Women’s roles and contribution as leaders are amplified and accepted at the local, national, and international levels.

This indicator is very important because it addresses the need to ensure that women’s organizing and mobilization should ideally be organic and not led by organizations. In the case of this project, Search implemented a two-way approach. Firstly, they identified traditional groups such as coffee and revolving fund gatherings that are contributing to women’s empowerment and helped them grow to meet the increasing needs of their communities when it comes to representation and peace. Secondly, they identified budding networks and associations that needed capacity-building as well as strategic planning and provided the needed support.

In Gedarif, the community positively noted women’s contributions to the conflict in AlHomyrah area, coordinating with the families there to ensure their safety. Furthermore, the role of women in the conflict resolution of the Nuba and Beni Amer issues was also noted. Women’s contribution in the “Education Conference” in the Northern rural area was also championed as an important step to overcome a common issue in society i.e. child brides. As a result of women’s engagement for the Education Conference, the community was elated that a secondary school in the Northern rural area was reopened after closure due to low enrollment because of rampant child marriage rates. All of these examples involved women who were part of this project, in fact, the problem in AlHomyrah was shared by a woman who is from there and then the other women in the group accompanied her to that area.

In South Kordofan, women are carving out roles for themselves in different contexts and are entering spaces that they were unable to enter beforehand. In South Kordofan, women organized a cultural and sports carnival in the area and they were present in all areas and for the first time, all referees were women and this carnival was well-accepted by the local community.

R.3.1 3.a. % of targeted women who feel their contribution is recognized in peace, security, and political processes.

With a modest target of 60%, the endline evaluation found that 95% of respondents agreeing that their contribution is recognized in peace, security and political processes, it is evident that the communities have come a long way in engaging women positively, observing, recognizing and encouraging women when they accomplish work in the peace and security domain.

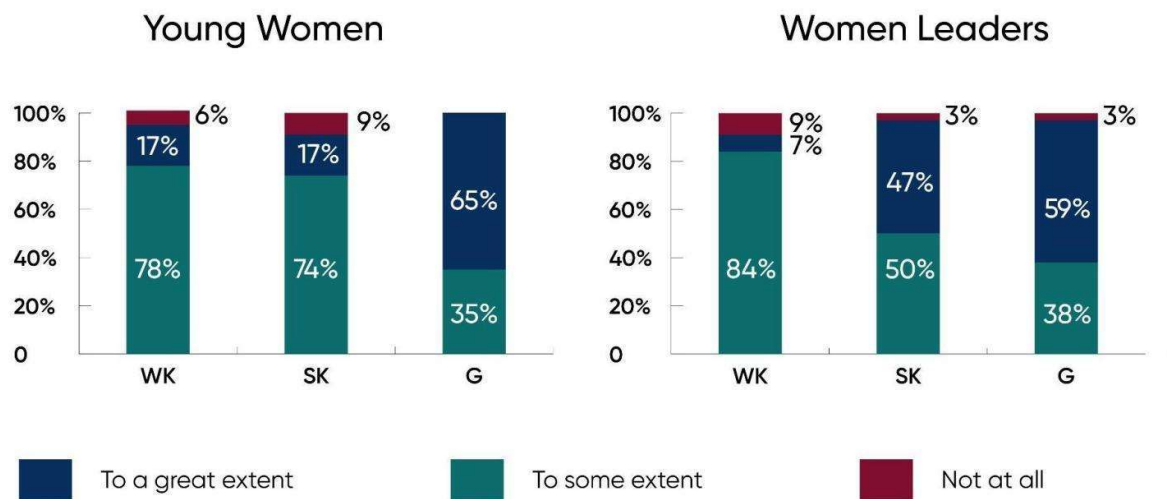


Figure demonstrating the percentage of targeted women who feel their contribution is recognized in peace, security, and political processes.

In South Kordofan, a participant reported their contribution (as the network) to stop a tribal conflict from growing in a neighborhood inside Kadugli over the last few months and traced this to increased knowledge and also their improved ability to navigate the social dynamics in their community. Once they approached the community, their role was recognized and they sat with the men in the community, who accepted their intervention. Women in Gedarif and West Kordofan noted that women’s role was always recognized with regards to security and political processes, but for a long time, their contribution was negative and they contributed to the continuation of the conflict. For example, in West Kordofan, women singers (Hakamat) contributed to the instigation and continuation of the conflict in Al-Fula a few years ago, and this is why the women networks were keen to ensure that Hakamat are part of the trainings and that their role is challenged and converted to positive reinforcement of peace and security. Furthermore, in Gedarif the community commended the women’s efforts in solving critical community issues, such as road maintenance and water issues.

R.3.2 % of community members who agree or strongly agree with the statement “women are capable of contributing and leading on peace and security”

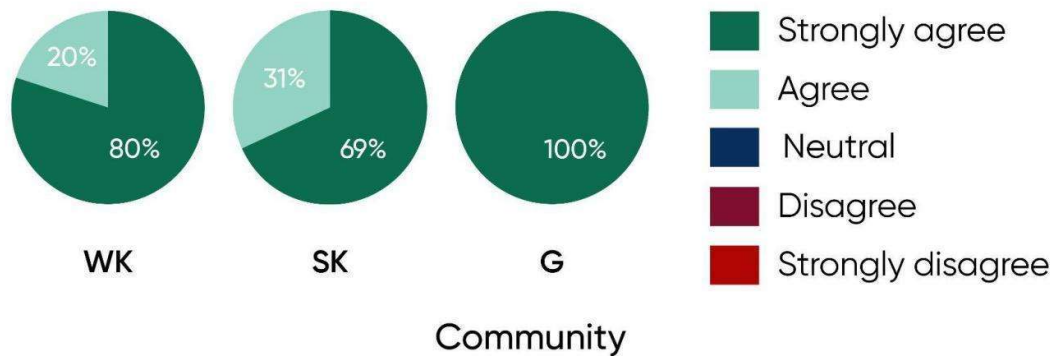


Figure demonstrating the percentage of community members in all states who agree or strongly agree with the statement “women are capable of contributing and leading on peace and security”.

Ninety eight percent (98%) of respondents (above the initial target of 75%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement in the endline survey, marking an important pillar in the community’s belief about the demonstrable capacities of women in leading peace and security issues. In Gedarif, men engaged women’s groups (including differently abled advocacy groups) and networks (such as Sudan Women Network and Gedarif Leaders). One example about women’s capacity to lead was mentioned in Gedarif, where the community noted women’s positive contribution to influence child rights in the larger peace dialogue with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC).

Another example from Gedarif to showcase the community’s support for women’s contribution in peace and security was when women were heading to attend an activity outside the city that focuses on peace-making and the street was blocked by protestors and no cars were allowed, however, the community opened the street when the women explained the purpose of their movement.

Programming and Targeting

The analysis in this section dissected data from the literature review, KIIs, FGDs and the endline survey to validate and triangulate the programmatic and project indicators in accordance with the OECD-DAC criteria that informed program relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and the key objectives of the study. Overall, the project's ability to facilitate capacity building of young and established women to connect, build alliances, empower actors, create healthy feedback loops and intergenerational/intersectional trust and dialogue in their wider communities in the target locations was expressed by participants from all demographics engaged in this endlined evaluation. Nonetheless, the project faced monumental challenges with the actual political, peace and security situation in the country during implementation being volatile, affecting many aspects of this project's success, but pockets of success were also plenty throughout the report and varied across the states.

Relevance

The project interventions were relevant to the project objectives as per the understanding of the partner organizations and their constituencies and this is due to constant follow-up, the participatory approach to the project plan of action and activities log as well as the joint (refresher) meetings conducted to ensure that all parties are on the same page. Promising practices include the high representation of disabled women such as in Gedarif as well as taking into consideration the perspective of the participants when it comes to designing the activities for the project.

The primary target audience - which is young women leaders- was partially met, but the audience needs to include younger women from university students to younger women under 35 years of age. This will not be simple due to conservative social norms that are limiting to the movement and presence of women, and especially young women, but community engagement on this issue is key. Furthermore, engagement of young women at universities is key to their continuous support of community activism beyond campuses (safe avenues for student activism and awareness raising). The opportunities provided to women in their early activism days could lead to more joining humanitarian, development and socially driven professional careers, further increasing women's participation in decision making avenues.

The gaps when it comes to inclusion and participation are due to the social and political dynamics in the different cities. For example, inclusion was visible in Gedarif due to the diversity in the state and the well-established social fabric, however, it was less in West Kordofan due to the ethnic polarization in the state as well as the way the state and the localities were shaped during the rule of Al-Bashir. In South Kordofan, the illiteracy rates, economic situation and societal pressure on women to manage households as a main role in the family all affect women's active participation despite inclusion efforts. Women are given secondary roles in society and hence, they are not always allowed to be vocal and are not involved in decision making at a community level. Furthermore, security in the area is jeopardized due to the continuous displacement of communities in nearby areas. Until the displaced are fully settled, the community is very involved. Women interviewed mentioned the project was affected by these surges in displacement as the women were highly involved in orienting the displaced around the area, especially women.

Effectiveness

Before the onset of the project, a noteworthy contribution of the revolution is that young women challenged their deeply traditional families and got out on the streets to fight for freedom, justice and peace. Their families, though reluctantly and sometimes violently resisted this, eventually gave in and supported their daughters and sisters to appear more in public domains.

The project created multiple opportunities for women: networking, voicing their opinion adequately and transparently, participating, attending and taking part in community and solidarity events - which sheds light on local leadership and garners opportunities. Women were able to access networks and committees where they can actively implement projects, raise awareness or advocate for a cause. A young woman in West Kordofan was able to find a scholarship opportunity to study abroad due to the network built through the project.

The project's peace forums did bridge the gap between women activists and leaders with their grassroots counterparts whether women farmers in Gedarif, traditional producers in West Kordofan and women in the informal sector and displaced communities in South Kordofan. However, this link has yet to materialize into a real partnership that ensures

that women leaders are able to articulate the concerns and priorities of more marginalized women while also giving them more platforms to speak with their own voice.

In one example, the Bilel village community services committee in Gedarif was exclusively run by men and even the one seat reserved for a woman member was often overruled by men. Women started their own initiatives and through effective implementation of the necessary interventions, they were able to take over the community services committee and built a dyke to prevent flooding - something the men's committee was unable to undertake successfully. This example, although it created some friction with the ineffective male-only committee, managed to win the larger community's trust in women's (young and established) leadership.

It is too early to understand how the project contributed to increasing acceptance and trust in young women's leadership at the community level because it is not enough to get positive feedback from the community without having solid evidence over a considerable period of time and in different locations and not just among political elites. This can't be understood now because the environment is still not entirely conducive for women's participation, less so after the ongoing violent crisis gripped the nation on April 15th. Nonetheless, in all states, participants did not mention any negative effects of the project, but they mentioned that sometimes the project clashed with cultural values of the communities. For example, the society's norms were critical of the engagement between young women and the male champions, which in turn hurdles the engagement between these two factions of the community to collaboratively solve peace and security issues.

One of the most important positives of the SK coffee clubs is that they went from informal gatherings to a very dynamic cultural and awareness raising club. Women discussed topics of relevance to them and learned from each other's experiences. Furthermore, networks were created and strengthened to alleviate livelihoods significantly. One initiative distributed seeds when in surplus and created a market for selling produce after yield. This was echoed in WK, where the economic parts of the project were seen as important, and young women's inclusion and participation was seen as directly tied to their economic well being. Therefore interventions that center economic empowerment win across all disciplines due to the impact economic independence has on women's interest and ability to fulfill activism.

One critique was that the activities of the project focused on specific urban areas, whereas the rural areas were not prioritized. The recommendation is to map rural areas where needs arise and connect urban and rural activities for maximum engagement potential between different groups to exchange experiences and skills, especially as most conflicts occur in areas that share boundaries and resources.

The partnership between Search and partners was effective mostly in Gedarif and West Kordofan because the organizations have the necessary capacity, networks on the ground and they are also accepted by the community at large. The most effective approaches that the project undertook include:

- The inclusion of the project partners in the proposal and project development.
- The regular refresher meetings between the constituencies and the organizations to ensure that all the participants are on the same page while also extracting feedback from the participants to improve the future work.

One shortcoming that was highlighted was the need for more funding and capacity building from the side of the partner organizations to ensure that they are able to expand their networks and continue to map associations, groups and organizations in different parts of the states or regions. This is critical to ensuring that the organizations don't work in a bubble and are able to expand the programmes beyond what is termed "the usual suspects" in the Sudanese civil society.

Impact

In West Kordofan, many new initiatives were created that gave young women tangible and visible participation in community interventions. The sentiments of the young women in Al-Fula were that yes, there is change due to the increased capacity and linkages created by the project's training and community based initiatives, but impact needs a

longer timeframe to enable initiatives to create meaningful change, and not lose sight of the ultimate required result of the initiatives. To that end, the young women in these initiatives expressed their concern that after capacity building and networks creation, there are no follow up activities so the trained young women can implement their learnings and prove their demonstrable impact in the peace and security arena.

In Gedarif, participants emphasized the positive impacts of the empowerment components of the project. Economic empowerment was crucial and closely tied with the ability of women to have a voice and stand up for themselves and their communities. One women leader from South Kordofan noted “our people say the one with no money has no mouth to speak with. Financial standing and education affect whether a woman has a position and salary, which influences whether she can speak freely, unlike a woman who is at home receiving a stipend. The latter won’t find herself independent. Independence will give women a voice equal to a man’s”.

One of the impacts of the project is that women are now proactive and participating in Joudias, which are community conflict resolutions forums, where they mediate for peace and reconciliation between opposing community members. Participants in the KII mentioned a market for armed movements that was created by a woman in the community. She advocated for armed movements in the area to still shop in the same common area with the rule of going in without their arms. Furthermore, she negotiated with the movements to ensure accountability to any conflict that arises in the market to be held among them without harming the market’s other shoppers.

Another community initiative that was echoed as a success by participants, was the maintenance of both generators at the local maternity hospital, as power cuts created massive hurdles for the safe delivery and health of mothers.

Participants of the media academy noted they benefited from the training, and those who produced programs noted the good caller feedback and interesting discussions. In Alfula, partners discussed that the program timing was not appropriate and thus it did not reach a wide audience. Furthermore, they added that the region needs a community radio as the national one is not trusted by many and thus they do not tune in. All participants thought the media component of the project was limited and that radio programmes were relatively few and not widely disseminated and promoted to spark far reaching debates. They hoped to see more coverage of the project activities.

In fact, Search and partners have to rethink the impact of state-based radio stations. A recommendation by a participant in Alfula was to ask notable community members to do special call-ins and spark interesting debates and encourage listeners to provide their opinions too. Another important consideration is that the community is more attuned to national radio stations (not local) as well as social media . This is per interviews in the three states where the interviewees said that if they listen to radio, they listen to national radio stations such as Hala FM and not the local stations. Moreover, they also noted that social media pages connected to their state or cities are also a great source of information²¹. On social media, Search’s project campaign content was engaging and received many encouraging comments from females and males alike. For example, a female commented on a video interview with a human and women’s rights activist “she is aware and never gave up despite her long struggle. Praying to God to improve the situation in the country so such competencies can be driven towards benefiting the country and community”.

Very little impact was recorded in the states from the radio programs, except in Gedarif where the community commended the 6 radio shows that tackled women’s political participation, UNSCR 1325 and youth empowerment, featuring contributions and call-in from the larger community via telephone. The shows themselves were a great area for men and women to collaborate to produce the well-balanced content and feature the right speakers (both men and women). Furthermore, the larger community interest in the topic was noted as call-ins came from nearby areas like Sinnar and Damazin. The health officer interviewed noted that “there should have been more programs because we are looking for women to lead the political process from one generation to another. We need the media to work more for us (women) so it can introduce us to notable leaders that we’re not yet engaged with.” She added that dissemination of content is very important to reach a wider audience on various platforms that they’re comfortable

²¹ All cities and towns in Sudan have FB groups that have people from that particular town and it is usually a place to share information on the town and its activities.

receiving information in such as social media, TV and radio. Adding that open discussions and panels held as part of the activities can also be useful for listeners is streamed on media channels, and it'll reach rural women as well.

Sustainability

Through the skills and opportunities of this project, women have gained a seat at the table in the various states covered. Nonetheless, one challenge they have to continue solving is that they now have seats, but no microphones; men retain the highest levels of authority in all peace and security committees and groups, allowing women the seats and the voice but no concrete influence over the course of actions. From the various conversations with leaders and young women in this project, the result of having a seat at the table is not taken for granted, but the realization that the fight continues to gain traction on influence is palpable. It is likely that the seats will be retained, but just as those were a challenge to obtain, the influence and gaining seats in the top echelons of decision making will also be a leap.

There are two major factors affecting the sustainability of this project results. The economic situation is a big factor that is limiting the movement and spread of the women's network and with the ongoing war, this is even more pressing. The second factor is the volatile political situation in Sudan and the longer this continues and the country continues to be under military rule, the less women we would see in public and political spaces and this is because in general, social norms only become stricter when there is insecurity and violence. Thus, despite having the tools to join and actively and effectively participate in the peace and security agenda, women will lose the very mics the project gave them, which they used during the project's timeline.

With the advent of armed clashes between SAF and RSF in Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan since April 15th, more challenges are expected to endanger the sustainability of the progress made in this project and preserve the spaces/mechanisms in place to encourage more inclusivity and impact in the peace, security and policy arena. There are three main challenges that are relevant to sustainability of the effort as well as the project infrastructure; firstly, mass displacement affected Darfur and Khartoum and many activists or individuals who were trained by the project are now either in other states or outside the country and even if the war stops, then returning back to Khartoum will not be immediate and many will suffer from long-term economic struggles tied to loss of employment, property and assets which would deplete their ability to be active and contribute. Secondly, the two possible scenarios which are the conflict stops and SAF gains back gradual control of the country or both entities share power in different parts of the country will have negative impact on the civil society, as non-violent civil politics will be very limited and civic space will dwindle, any upcoming peace process will likely ignore women and men civic and political leaders. Thirdly, most of the social and physical infrastructure in Khartoum took a heavy blow and any resumption for Search and other organizations means that they have to deal with very poor banking services, loss of qualified trainers and staff members as well as logistical problems to carry out workshops and events and it will take research and time for the cities - especially Khartoum - to get rebuilt.

A big problem that faces the project's sustainability in the the states more than Khartoum is the ongoing brain drain as the communities continue to lose strong and well-trained activists. We noted that several men who were supposed to attend the FGDs and two women we wanted to interview were commonly present in Khartoum. In Gedarif, for example, the interviewees in the FGD told us that over the years, many women activists left the state to Khartoum or outside Sudan seeking a better life. Migration is very common as women and families leave the state seeking better employment and this drains the state of critical human resources. With the onset of violent clashes in April, the likelihood is that more migration and loss of trained and experienced actors will take place.

A further challenge for sustaining talent and expertise working in the states beyond the project's timeline is that political participation has been centered in Khartoum, because until now, Sudan is still a mix between states and regions so federalism is not implemented at great means. The interviewees recounted several women who represent their interests and are strong leaders, but they would add that they had to leave the state or country. This impacts the sustainability of this project outcomes and the development of women's voices in the peace and security as well as general community grievances issues.

The violent armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces which broke out on the morning of April 15th led to serious security, humanitarian and protection issues for millions in Khartoum, Kordofdan and Darfur (epicenters of the conflict). The conflict disrupted businesses and organizations all across the capital and other conflict hubs, including breaking down communication channels. Additionally, the worsening humanitarian and security situation led to the migration and displacement of more than 2.8 million Sudanese people. Among those displaced, it is possible that some of the project beneficiaries would be impacted, either by insecurity threatening their lives or displacement and migration to other areas where their solid networks for activism and community participation may be limited or completely lost.

Conclusions

The project's pillars enabled women's knowledge, skills, confidence and abilities to tangibly progress in all states. Nonetheless, these elements faced a crucial challenge; actual inclusion in the peace and security committees remains under the male leaders' control. In engaging both men and women in this project, the sentiments about the importance of women's participation remained positive throughout, nonetheless, when action is required, there is little accountability from the males to enact the inclusion process they have been made aware about.

To analyze the social, economic and political eco-system that furthers women's political participation, we have to understand that Sudan is governed by what Alex De Waal (2019) called the "political marketplace" The political marketplace is based on transactions and to enter it, you have to offer an incentive such as constituencies or arms. Due to this, to enter this marketplace, you have to have power (ie: the security and military apparatuses), you have to have loyalties (ie: political parties and traditional leadership). If we understand that the political marketplace is controlled by the military, the paramilitary (armed groups) and traditional leaders, it is easy to see that women are not present in this marketplace and it is extremely difficult for them to access it.

To influence this marketplace is to directly change the course of the Sudanese political economy and this is a long-term process, but women can play a central role in this transformation. In the short-term, women have to enter the marketplace through situating themselves in political parties as well as embedding themselves in the traditional forces. Within this scope, they have to find allies and develop partnerships based on sound political transactions that gives women more economic and political gains and this is done through political participation even if limited and women have to make concessions such as agreeing to the quota system as a temporary affirmative action effort. In the long-term, women have to be part of challenging and transforming the political economy in post-colonial Sudan because it strengthens conservative social norms and it benefits from exclusion of women and many groups. This requires participation in the legislative entity as well as reform of the security apparatus to abort the continuation of a patriarchal hegemonic masculinity culture.

Recommendations

1) Assess the capacity of the partner organizations:

The partner organizations are the pillars of this project and the effectiveness of the project (which is different from success) depends on their ability to grasp the main objectives of the project, implement it while taking into consideration the interests of their communities and to also ensure that the essence of the project is sustained in the communities.

The three partner organizations in Gedarif, West and South Kordofan, respectively, are not on an equal pedestal and don't have the same capacity or even understanding of the project. Partners assessment will enable Search to engage each partner to the best of their ability and invest in capacity development or longer orientation as needed to ensure the partner implements the project effectively. Furthermore, newer and youth-led organizations should also be considered if their capacity can be improved within the project's timeline. This will enable many of the trained youth to be engaged in sustainable projects rather than short-lived initiatives, and will enable them to utilize their new skills and develop them further through practical means.

2) Integrate social media listening into future projects working on women's empowerment:

Social media listening is listening to and analyzing conversations that are happening on social media and are related to your brand or a certain topic that you are working on. This is conducted through tools such as talkwalker which allows you to tap into discussions across platforms using certain keywords that are relevant to what you want to analyze. This allows you to find influencers, content ideas, to figure out what people are seeing and understand the needs of the communities.

An example of this is the Ministry of Health doing social listening on COVID-19 and women. In this regard, social listening would help the Ministry understand what women think about the COVID-19 vaccines, their fears and the conversations they are having. This would enable the Ministry to draft better messages that specifically cater to women (ie: showing that the vaccines don't cause infertility).

For this specific activity, social listening will enable Search to cast a wide net spanning all of Sudan (especially during this violent crises with the over-reliance on social media by citizens in warzones, displaced and migrant populations), to identify the trending and common sentiments regarding women's empowerment and inclusion in peace and security in Sudan. Findings from the target locations and their communities will offer an organic and unfiltered overview of women, men and youth sentiments that can assist in the development of interventions targeting each segment. Due to the growing reliance on digital media for finding news and sharing opinions, this element is now crucial in every project design.

3) Consider collaborations with social media pages, influencers and outlets:

The state-based radio stations are not popular in the states that were visited during the course of the fieldwork, especially among the youth who have access to other means, but also cross-cuttingly because of the technical issues radios face in their operations, making them unstable and inconsistent. It was noted by the participants that communities prefer the national based radio stations as well as social media outlets.

For future programming, we suggest mapping of social media pages that are connected to the states in question and working with them to build content and gauge sentiments. Furthermore, although the digital media campaign that Search ran was very popular, generating a lot of engagement in the comments section and highlighting important figures, third party engagement has become an indispensable communication route for commercial and non-profit organizations alike. With the boom in the content creators market and production studios in Sudan, Search has a wide plethora of audiences it can tap into through carefully vetted creators who can tap into diverse audiences, analyze the data and provide valuable insights for future communications.

4) More targeted capacity-building in network and coalition-building as well as support to the established networks:

The networks need critical capacity-building across several areas such as understanding the local context (and how it materializes within the larger gender and social power dynamics), resolving the internal power dynamics within the networks as it pertains to inter-generational and ethnic conflicts, understanding the different forms of powers (visible, hidden and invisible powers), developing a theory of change that is flexible when it comes to the dynamic context and is guided by social transformation, understanding different means to ensure that the networks are sustainable. The networks also need to benefit from the Sudanese women's networks that were effective and the ones that continue to be effective and engage with them in lesson-learning (ie: the Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace known as SuWEP). Moreover, the networks require medium-term institutional support to continue building power²² across their community and this is through supporting the networks, getting office space and purchasing critical equipment (ie: laptops and other equipment) to facilitate the strategic work of the networks.

5) Search and partners have to rethink the impact of state-based radio stations:

It was noted that the community is more attuned to national radio stations such as Hala FM and Radio Omdurman (this is limited to those with cars) as well as social media. When it comes to radio stations, the majority said that they already believe that the local radio stations are limited and boring so they don't tune in and it would require sustained efforts to attract them back to the radio stations. When it comes to social media, they receive most of their information from Whatsapp groups as well as Facebook groups related to their states or cities. This recommendation stems from interviews in the three states where the interviewees said that if they listen to radio, they listen to national radio stations such as Hala FM and not the local stations. Moreover, they also noted that social media pages connected to their state or cities are also a great source of information²³.

6) Strengthen women's networks for longer term sustainability

To achieve sustainability requires intervention at three levels, firstly, the networks need continued capacity-building as well as more presence on the ground (physical space and equipment) and access to long-term core funding and this is the only way to eventually become organic networks that have support within their communities and are able to have their own business development plans (ie: investments that generate revenue to cover the main expenses of the networks). The challenge with this approach lies in the fact that its impact is contingent upon the stability of the country and the absence of persistent impoverishment within the community. If the situation continues to deteriorate, achieving sustainability will become exceedingly challenging unless upcoming projects incorporate microfinance elements into their networks

Moreover, more capacity-building for the women leaders is needed, as well as support to continue taking part in conferences, workshops and seminars in their community, inside and outside the country. This could be done through giving small grants to the networks to support political participation. This is critical because the current leadership structures within political parties, governance and international organizations do not encourage or support women's political participation and continue to cement the status quo. Intense advocacy is also needed with international organizations and political entities that ensure that equal women's participation is prioritized and this is a long-term effort and requires an internal reckoning.

7) Walk the talk

An observation of the project's partner organization was that the coordinators of the project are mostly experienced men or women. The young women trained in this program would have been a great fit in the project if they were given a more active role. This would also set the path for "walking the talk" and practicing the pillars of inclusion and participation of young women the project centers on. On the job training would highly elevate their ability to effectively implement their learned skills and knowledge and remain within their communities seeking gainful employment in issues of relevance to the community needs.

²² Building power is more tactical than taking power. Taking power is about taking on positions while building power is about engaging the community and changing them into allies for my objectives and goals.

²³ All cities and towns in Sudan have FB groups that have people from that particular town and it is usually a place to share information on the town and its activities.

Lessons Learned for Future Programming

- 1) Coffee ceremonies and other informal gatherings are a great place for personal story sharing, seeking counsel about household issues regarding children and marriages, thus strengthening the women's bonds with each other to lessen the frictions that could arise due to political polarization, diversity in backgrounds and age differences. Furthermore, these ceremonies enable women to invite non-project participants from different areas, learning about their own issues and challenges and passing on the knowledge in a semi-structured way, hence continuing the knowledge sharing cycle.
- 2) Diligent assessment of project partners and tailored orientation and capacity development programming will enable the project to be implemented effectively across all locations without evident gaps.
- 3) Communication across media must include social media as all visited communities were visibly engaged on social media for news and current affairs. To expand reach and tailor campaigns to the communities' tone, vetted social influencers can aid Search in its future programs success.
- 4) Besides political empowerment activities, women appreciated the economic development activities. They perceive the two elements complementary to each other, to enable them to fund or contribute to community initiatives as well as stabilize their own household income and costs management to have the freedom and peace of mind to still contribute and participate in community activities for peace and security.
- 5) Economic empowerment was a strong battle-front for women in South Kordofan; women who benefited from the workshops delivered in this project were able to improve their economic standing, hence influencing other women to join to improve their own in a stagnant economic environment. More importantly, many women faced violence and rejection from the males in their families, until the economic benefit began to be visible for project beneficiaries. After which, more women were allowed by the males in their families to participate, take part and improve conditions for their families. Although the premise is economic, women were allowed to be in spaces where they are transformed holistically to be active in peace, security, advocacy and community engagement. The impacts of this is manifolds for each household and the community at large as traditional norms are replaced.
- 6) Tribal conflict is a long-standing challenge in the target states and it will continue to affect the project because every single incident harms the social fabric. Tribal conflicts are not only costly when it comes to lives, resources and property, but they also lead to severe political and social polarization and this affects critical pillars of the project such as representation and network-building. In this regard, representation becomes tied to ethnic background and not the ability to realize the outcomes of the network while network-building is at stake because the networks could splinter based on ethnic identity. The critical lesson learned here is that tribal conflict has both short and long-term impact and honest dialogues need to happen between the communities to shape the role of the networks when it comes to conflict mitigation and the networks can include guidelines to ensure an open, honest and non-discriminatory environment.

Annex I: List of Documents Reviewed

Annex II: List of KII Interviewees

Annex III: List of Project Activities

1. Leadership and Peace Training for Young Women
2. Mentorship Reflection and Training for Established Women Leaders
3. Peer-to-Peer Mentorship and Support Sessions
4. Community Peace Forums
5. Young Women-led Community Initiatives for Reconciliation
6. CGA Training for Women Political Leaders
7. CGA Training for Young Women and Women Champions (men)
8. Women Leaders Networks
9. Peace Agreement Forums
10. Reflection and Planning Sessions
11. Youth Initiatives
12. Town Hall Meetings/Advocacy Visits
13. Friends of Women Leaders Luncheons
14. Multimedia Campaign

Annex IV: Full Indicator Table (Outcomes and Outputs)

Indicator	Definition and disaggregates	Related Activities	Baseline Findings	Target	Endline Findings
OVERALL GOAL: <i>To empower a diverse array of young women to meaningfully participate in Sudanese peace and political processes in support of a more inclusive transition.</i>					
Outcome 1: <i>Young women leaders have increased capacity and confidence to lead efforts to advance peace and security at the community level.</i>					
1.a. % of targeted young women who report feeling prepared to speak and lead on peace and security.	Sex, age, location, category	1,3,5,7,11	23.12%	48%	66%
1.b. % of targeted young women who report having opportunities to influence peace and security.	Sex, age, location, category	4,5,8,9,10,12	50%	75%	59%
1.c. % of community members who believe that women can contribute positively to peace and security.	Sex, age, location, category	4,9,12,13,14	50%	70%	96%
Outputs:					
1.1.1 % of trained young women who demonstrate increased knowledge of concepts related to leadership, conflict transformation,	Sex, age, location	1,3,5,7,11	0	80%	see visualization

UNSCR 1325 and 2250					
1.1.2 % of target women (young women and established women leaders) who believe collaboration with women from a different group (age, ethnic, religious) is effective to advance peace and security	Sex, age, location, category	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	0	80%	
1.2.1 % of targeted young women who report working with established women leaders on peace and security in the past six months	Sex, age, location, category	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	0	70%	71%
1.2.2 % of targeted established women leaders who report having engaged regularly with young women leaders in the past six months	Sex, age, location	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	0	80%	96%
1.2.3 # of community-based peace and security initiatives led by women	Sex, age, location	4,5,8,9,11,12,13	0	12 at least	Total: 15 10 in Gedarif and South Kordofan state (2021). 4 community peace forums in South Kordofan (2021-2022). 1 in West Korodofan (2022)

Outcome 2: Women's political engagement and advocacy during the transition are strengthened.					
2.a. % targeted women who believe that they can make a positive difference on peace and security issues in their communities.	Sex, location, age, category	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	66.7%	80%	95%
2.b. % of community members who believe women are key actors in political processes and advocacy in their communities.	Sex, location, age, category	4,9,11,12,13,14	33.5%	59%	94%
2.c. % of targeted women who report having opportunities to influence political processes and policy decisions in Sudan (and can provide at least 1 example).	Sex, location, age, category	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	64.2%	80%	83%
Outputs:					
2.1.2 % trained young women and young women champions (men) who demonstrate increased skills in building consensus and advocacy	Sex, age, location, category	1,3,7,13	0	80%	85%
2.1.3 # women leaders networks strengthened.	Sex, age, location, category	8	0	6	Total: 7 1 in South Kordofan (2021) 6 (2 in West Kordofan and 4 in Gedarif (2021-2022))

2.2.1 % community members who feel they have opportunities to contribute feedback to peace processes	Sex, location, age, category	4,9,11,12,13,14	0	70%	see visualization
2.2.2 % of targeted women, young women, and youth who report collaborating with diverse groups on advocacy points in the past six months	Sex, location, age, category	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	0	70%	95%
2.2.3 # youth initiatives conducted	location, category, type	11,12	0	12	Total youth initiatives: 10 3 in Gedarif (2021-2022) 4 in Kharoum (2022)
2.2.4 # of townhall meetings conducted	location, category, type			4	Total townhalls: 3 meetings (2022)
Outcome 3: Women's roles and contribution as leaders are amplified and accepted at the local, national, and international levels.					
3.a. of targeted women who feel their contribution is recognized in peace, security, and political processes.	Sex, location, age, category	3,4,5,8,9,10,11,12	0	60%	95%
3.c. % of community members who agree or strongly agree with the statement "women are capable of contributing and	Sex, location, age, category	13,14	0	75%	98%

leading on peace and security”					
Outputs:					
3.1.1. % of surveyed community members who demonstrate increased awareness of women’s and young women’s leadership (can cite at least one example)	Sex, age, location, category	4,9,11,12,13, 14	0	60%	75%
3.1.2 # of stories of young women’s leadership produced	Sex, age, location	14	0	20	Total: 20 4 as reported by Radio al Banat. From SFCG’s social media page: 16
3.2.2 # of recommendations developed to support young women’s inclusion in peace and political processes	Location, category	1-14/	0	5	

Annex V: Final survey, KII and FGD guide templates

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