

FUTURES ON HOLD



**How War and Displacement
Are Impacting
Young Sudanese Women**



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Acknowledgements

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About the Organizations



The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, youth, and other people who are often overlooked, undervalued, and underserved in humanitarian responses to displacement and crises. We work in partnership with displaced communities to research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for gender-transformative and sustained improvement in humanitarian, development, and displacement policy and practice. Since our founding in 1989, we have been a leading expert on the needs of refugee women, children, and youth and the policies that can protect and empower them.

www.womensrefugeecommission.org



The Global Refugee Youth Network (GRYN), formed in 2020, is a global network empowering refugee youth leaders to instigate change in their communities. By bridging the gap between refugee youth involvement and representation, GRYN recognizes and capitalizes on the potential of youth-led initiatives. As a refugee-led and youth-led organization, GRYN aims to address the challenges faced by young people by supporting the work of refugee youth. This includes providing training and seed funding to support groups, particularly those led by adolescent girls and young women. GRYN has developed an innovative approach to partnering with refugee youth-led organizations (RYLOs) that strengthens their leaders, especially young women. This focus on refugee-youth gives GRYN a powerful foundation for empowering refugee communities.

www.gryn.network



Hopes & Actions Foundation

Hopes and Actions Foundation champions digital rights through tech policy advocacy and community empowerment. We collaborate with diverse networks, from activists to social movements, to ensure technology fosters a just and sustainable world. Committed to inclusive and equitable policies. Our vision centers on uplifting women's and marginalized voices in the digital realm through policy advocacy, capacity building, and awareness campaigns.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

GBV	Gender-based violence
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
GRYN	Global Refugee Youth Network
IDPs	Internally displaced people
INGO	International nongovernmental organization
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
AIRD	African Initiative for Relief and Development
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
MISP	Minimum Initial Service Package for Sexual and Reproductive Health



Introduction

The war in Sudan has had a devastating human cost. Since fighting broke out between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in April 2023, an estimated 60,000 people have died.¹

In 2024, the Women's Refugee Commission, in partnership with the Sudan Family Planning Association and Gender in Emergencies Group, launched [In Her Own Words: Voices of Sudan](#), a report showcasing the stories of 22 internally displaced and refugee Sudanese women, and how the war had impacted their lives.

The report included stories from a number of young Sudanese women, aged 18-24, who shared the particular challenges they had experienced continuing with their education, securing reliable livelihoods, or accessing healthcare in displacement. Many young women expressed a sense of hopelessness, due to the numerous lost opportunities and complex traumas they had experienced.

In 2025, the Women's Refugee Commission, in collaboration with the Global Refugee Youth Network (GRYN) and Hopes and Actions Foundation, conducted a rapid assessment to further investigate the experiences and needs of young women displaced from Sudan. We worked with displaced Sudanese researchers to interview 20 young Sudanese women who have been displaced to neighbouring Egypt, Uganda and Chad, and the West Kordofan region of Sudan to learn more about how displacement and conflict have impacted their access to livelihoods, education, and healthcare.

"I wish organizations... to focus on youth, because they were the most affected by the war, especially with the closures of schools and universities. We are unemployed and our lives have stopped completely. We are the kernel of Sudan. We are the ones to build Sudan in and for the future, so I wish all parties to take care of youth during this war."

- Ayesha Dabaka, aged 24, university student



Key Findings

Our findings highlight how, no matter where they are displaced to, systemic failures are obstructing young Sudanese women's access to livelihoods, education, and health services.

The war has uprooted young women's lives; not only have they been physically displaced from their homes, but they have also lost the support provided by their families, friends, and communities. Numerous young participants, particularly from the Darfur and West Kordofan regions, have reported losing their caregivers to violence perpetrated by warring factions amidst ongoing and past conflicts. Moreover, some individuals noted that this is not their first encounter with displacement and recounted their prior experiences of being separated from their family members.

The loss of access to livelihood opportunities, education, and healthcare, has left young women without the sense of security they once had within their communities.



1. **Livelihoods:** For the majority of the young women interviewed, safe and sustainable livelihood opportunities were not accessible in places of displacement. Before the war, many young women relied on their caregivers for support. However, due to the significant loss of caregivers and financial opportunities, and many young women bearing caregiving responsibilities themselves, they face a pressing need to access livelihood options to sustain their families and pursue their education.



2. **Education:** Current educational experiences reveal a landscape marked by profound disruption, significant financial and language barriers in areas such as Chad, Uganda, and Egypt, and inadequate educational infrastructure, particularly in displacement camps in West Kordofan, Sudan. Before the war, participants were actively engaged in various stages of their education, ranging from preparation for the Sudan School Certificate to university studies.



3. **Health:** The financial burden of accessing healthcare was cited by all participants as a barrier, with concerns about the high cost of treatment and lack of access to medications for pre-existing health issues in displacement settings in West Kordofan, Chad, and Uganda. The majority of participants in all locations reported developing health conditions as a result of the war and displacement. Many reported needing to access mental health support, particularly for survivors of gender-based violence and individuals mourning the loss of family members.



4. **Safety, Security, and Protection Concerns:** Most of the young women expressed feelings of discomfort in their displacement environments, with security concerns significantly increasing their stress and anxiety, especially in the camps in Chad and West Kordofan.



5. **Access to Information and Means of Communication:** Many young Sudanese women across different displacement settings could not access information and were unable to communicate with friends and family. Participants' access to information and communication was varied. Young women in West Kordofan and Chad reported limited access to digital devices and the internet, with some stating they lost their devices due to the war. Internet connection within Sudan remains a challenge. In contrast, those in Uganda and Egypt have access to these technologies, but encounter difficulties because of the high costs associated with activating their internet services.

This research was conducted during a period of severe humanitarian funding cuts, which may disproportionately impact young Sudanese women who have been displaced by the war. The Women's Refugee Commission, GRYN, and Hopes and Actions Foundation urge donors to

maintain funding to the [Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan](#), as well as the [Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan](#), while prioritizing funding for local women-led, refugee-led, and youth-led organizations, and protecting funding for sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence programs.

Meanwhile, we call on host countries to ensure young Sudanese women have equitable and safe access to national healthcare and education systems and support their right to legal, non-discriminatory, and safe employment.

Photo by Safa Adam, Adre camp in Eastern Chad



A young woman from Darfur said:

"I was born in Kotom locality in North Darfur and displaced to Al-fashir [in North Darfur] in 2004 after my father was killed in the war at that time. Again amid this war, my husband was killed by Sudanese Armed Forces. I used to depend on him as a caregiver. Now I depend on myself and work roasting coffee, then grinding it and selling it in small quantities to be able to provide for my son. Our income has reduced by a large amount, and now I live in Biali camp in Uganda. This has affected us in many ways, including our inability to continue my education and pay rent for a house outside the camp. I passed the secondary examination, and was preparing to enroll in a university before the war."

Background

After two years of relentless conflict, Sudan represents the worst food insecurity crisis in the world, affecting almost 25 million people,³ and the worst displacement crisis. More than 11 million Sudanese have been displaced internally, and over 3 million have fled to neighbouring countries.⁴

Public services, such as schools, hospitals, and markets, as well as critical supply chains for the transport of food, medicines, and other goods, have been decimated across Sudan due to ongoing violence. This, in addition to mass internal displacement, has resulted in harsh and substandard living conditions for internally displaced people (IDPs).⁵ Refugees in neighboring countries similarly face chronic insecurity, violence, and humanitarian need.

A war on women and girls

This situation has had particularly severe impacts on women and girls. In Chad, Egypt, and Uganda, the majority of UNHCR-registered refugees from Sudan are women and girls.⁶ Food insecurity and famine have led to high rates of malnutrition for pregnant women and caregiving young women, especially among displaced populations, while access to healthcare—particularly sexual and reproductive healthcare for reproductive-age women, adolescent girls, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), remains limited.⁷ Over 2.5 million girls, representing 74 percent of school-age girls, are now out of school.⁸ Sudanese women are increasingly being forced to take on new financial and security responsibilities for their families, due to separation from or killing of male family members—yet female-headed households face significantly more food insecurity than male-headed households. The humanitarian response has fallen short in providing menstrual hygiene products, leading to significant hardships for women and girls.⁹

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), particularly rape and gang rape, is widespread in conflict-affected regions, with demand for gender-based violence (GBV) services increasing by 288 percent in 2024 alone.¹⁰

"Displaced women and girls are increasingly experiencing sexual violence, including rape, on roads and checkpoints while actively fleeing conflict, as well as in shelters, displacement camps, or awaiting visas at border points."¹¹

There are reports of young women and girls, including internally displaced people (IDPs), being trafficked for sexual exploitation, while Sudanese women and girls who flee to neighboring countries face heightened risks of GBV, child and forced marriage, and selling or exchanging sex for assets to meet basic needs.¹²

Humanitarian funding in crisis

The Sudan crisis is the largest humanitarian and displacement crisis in the world; however, the humanitarian response to the crisis has been chronically underfunded. Women-led organizations, including women-led mutual aid groups and emergency response rooms, received only 1.63 percent of humanitarian funding to Sudan in 2023, despite offering critical frontline services such as healthcare, psychological support, and food assistance.¹³ In 2025, funding for Sudan's humanitarian response is at crisis point, with only 13 percent of the humanitarian need and response plan funded as of April 2025.¹⁴ The Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, which provides support for Sudanese refugees and host communities in countries such as Egypt and Uganda, has only received 5.9 percent of funding required.¹⁵

The sudden termination of US foreign assistance—which, in 2024, accounted for 44.7 percent of Sudan's Humanitarian Response and 57.5 percent of the Regional Refugee Response plan—has led to a collapse of essential services for millions of IDPs and refugees in Sudan and neighboring countries.¹⁶ Displacement camps across Sudan, which rely on humanitarian aid for food, water, and healthcare services, now report deaths from malnutrition and treatable health conditions, the closure of health centers, and a complete lack of water and medicines in some camps; UN agencies and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) have similarly had to drastically reduce or shut down essential programs, including nutrition, water and sanitation, health, and cash assistance.¹⁷ Young Sudanese women have played a critical role in establishing emergency response rooms, mutual aid groups that provide frontline services to Sudanese communities. Yet many of these have been forced to close as a result of funding cuts, including an estimated 900 of the 1,400 mutual aid-led community kitchens that serve up to two million people around Sudan.¹⁸

Humanitarian funding cuts and shortfalls have also seen a sudden loss in humanitarian services and legal protections for Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries. In Egypt, UNHCR will now suspend all medical treatment for refugees except for emergency life-saving procedures.¹⁹ In Chad, reproductive health services, including maternity wards for Sudanese refugees, have been shut down; programs to protect Sudanese women from GBV have been terminated; and more than 150,000 refugee children will be left without access to education if the cuts persist into 2026.²⁰ In Uganda, which hosts the largest refugee population in Africa, the World Food Programme has been forced to completely cut food rations for one million refugees.²¹

The humanitarian response has been further complicated by restricted humanitarian access to displaced and conflict-affected communities. Across the region, aid provision remains severely limited as humanitarian organizations encounter significant access challenges due to armed groups frequently contesting, obstructing, or controlling crucial routes.²² Bureaucratic obstacles imposed by both Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission and the Sudan Agency for Relief and Humanitarian Operations, such as delays in issuing visas and travel permits for humanitarian workers, continue to hinder the delivery of assistance at the required scale.²³

Humanitarian and civilian facilities continue to be targeted by all armed groups. Health facilities and health workers are particularly vulnerable to shelling and airstrikes, with 70 health workers killed across Sudan in January 2025 alone.²⁴ Repeated attacks on reproductive health facilities have left women and girls with even fewer spaces to receive life-saving reproductive health and GBV care.²⁵

Methodology

This assessment employed a qualitative methodology, using a desk review and semi-structured interviews with 20 young Sudanese women aged 18 to 24 who were displaced to both urban settings and refugee camps in Uganda, including Kampala, Kisasi, and Biali, Kirandgo Cluster camp; Cairo in Egypt; Kerinek and Um Jaras camp in Chad; and displacement camps in al-Nuhud in West Kordofan, Sudan. Young women were invited to participate in the project interviews to represent a diversity of education levels and marital status. The project team developed interview guides to explore issues related to education, livelihoods, and health. For ethical reasons, participants were not asked directly about experiences of violence, exploitation, or abuse.

Interviews were conducted in Arabic by trained female Sudanese facilitators. They were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for analysis and interpretation. Before data collection, interviewers obtained informed consent from all participants. The data were anonymized to remove any identifying characteristics. The project team conducted a co-analysis of transcripts to identify key themes, findings, and recommendations. Relevant policy documents, humanitarian reports, and academic literature were reviewed to provide context and background information.

Photo by Safa Adam, Adre camp in Eastern Chad



One participant was pregnant before displacement and had to flee the conflict in Babanosa Locality to Al-Nuhud Locality in West Kordofan, and gave birth in a non-hospital setting without adequate medical support. She said:

"I arrived at the camp while pregnant and gave birth there without any hospital assistance or medical services. I didn't receive any pain relief, soap, or sanitary pads. Additionally, my newborn daughter and two other children have not been given any vaccinations." She shared a distressing experience of stigma within the camp due to a lack of hygiene access post-childbirth. She said: "I have experienced discrimination and stigma from many people, even those inside the camp. After giving birth, there was a smell, and because I haven't had access to hygiene kits to maintain my cleanliness, I have faced negative treatment."

Locations of study

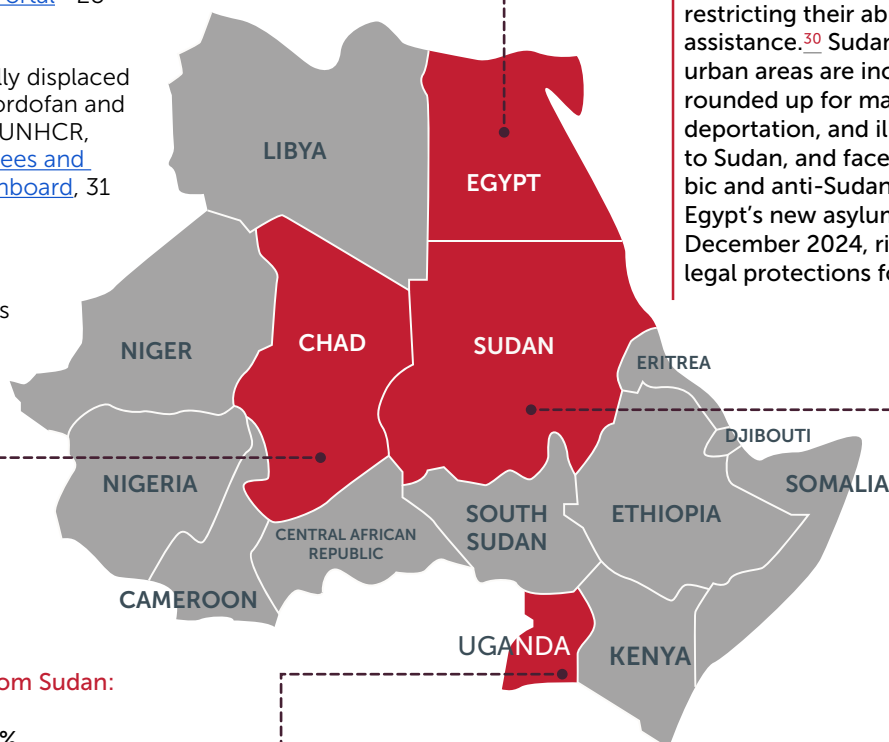
Factfile:

Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons in Chad, Egypt, Uganda, and West Kordofan, Sudan (as of May 2025)

Refugee figures for Chad, Egypt, Uganda from [UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#)—28 April 2025 figures.

Figures for internally displaced persons in West Kordofan and Sudan taken from UNHCR, [Overview of Refugees and IDPs in Sudan Dashboard](#), 31 March 2025.

Data on age and gender of refugees only available for those registered by UNHCR.



Egypt

Number of refugees from Sudan:

1,500,000

% women and girls: 54%

Overview: Egypt hosts the largest population of Sudanese refugees, with the majority of registered refugees settled in urban centers of Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria.²⁹ It takes an average of 800 days for refugees to obtain valid government-issued residency documents, restricting their ability to access basic assistance.³⁰ Sudanese refugees in urban areas are increasingly being rounded up for mass arrests, arbitrary deportation, and illegal forced return to Sudan, and face growing xenophobic and anti-Sudanese sentiment.³¹ Egypt's new asylum law, passed in December 2024, risks further eroding legal protections for refugees.³²

Chad

Number of refugees from Sudan:

779,584

% women and girls: 55%

Overview: Chad maintains a generous open-border policy for Sudanese refugees. In 2020, Chad adopted a pioneering asylum law that guarantees the essential rights for refugees, including freedom of movement, the right to work, and access to healthcare, education, and justice.²⁶ Yet Chad also faces its own prolonged humanitarian crisis, with over 40% of the population in need of assistance.²⁷ Over 200,000 refugees are still in spontaneous settlements in the border region of Chad, waiting to be transported to settlement sites across the country where they will have better access to services.

Uganda

Number of refugees from Sudan:

73,602

% women and girls: 51%

Overview: Uganda's 2006 Refugee Act has historically guaranteed refugees essential rights, including freedom of movement, employment, and association, and access to healthcare, education, and justice. It includes explicit provisions for the protection of women refugees from gender discrimination.³³ The majority of Sudanese refugees are settled around the capital city Kampala, or in refugee settlements in Kiryandongo. Over 20,000 Sudanese refugees in Uganda have university-level education, and 15,000 have secondary education.³⁴

West Kordofan, Sudan

Number of IDPs: 406,000

% women and girls: 53% (average for IDPs in Sudan; figures for West Kordofan unknown)

Overview: There has been escalating violence, severe food insecurity, and displacement in West Kordofan state due to ongoing territorial battles between the RSF and SAF, particularly since July 2024. Critical infrastructure and agricultural production, along with humanitarian workers, have been targeted, deepening the humanitarian crisis. Civilians have increasingly been targeted, with women and children killed in their homes. Schools have been repurposed as displacement shelters, further disrupting education for children.³⁵ At the time of writing this report, RSF attacked al-Nuhud locality, causing a second displacement for approximately 35,000 people, some of whom were already internally displaced persons (IDPs).³⁶

Livelihoods

Young women displaced by the war are facing significant and multifaceted barriers in pursuing safe and relevant livelihood opportunities. A primary challenge is the lack of available opportunities in their displacement locations. Participants repeatedly stated that “there are no available opportunities,” “we couldn’t find work here,” and “there is no way to get a job here.” Many young women are under greater pressure to support both their families and siblings, due to the loss (through death or separation) of family breadwinners. The challenges of displacement and trauma have significantly hindered their journey into adulthood.

Ongoing conflict and insecurity in West Kordofan



Job insecurity has forced refugees into hazardous, low-wage work, intensifying their vulnerability and aid dependence across different locations.³⁷ Consequently, many are relegated to unstable and meager forms of day-to-day labor, such as occasional chores or market errands, which yield insufficient income to meet basic needs. In West Kordofan, young women cited the loss of work materials, job opportunities, financial capital, and resources among the pressing challenges. For instance, one participant, a tea vendor before the war, lost her necessary materials and lacked the capital to restart her business after displacement.

Another significant barrier is the lack of familiarity with the new environment and the local job market. Participants said, “We don’t know this area or the people here,” and “We aren’t able to work on anything here because we don’t know how.” This unfamiliarity, potential safety concerns, and fear of venturing outside the camp further limit their ability to explore and engage in income-generating activities. The growing fragmentation of armed groups and ongoing conflicts in West Kordofan severely obstruct trade opportunities in the region, thereby restricting livelihood prospects for local communities.³⁸

Discrimination and limited humanitarian support in Chad



Young women from refugee camps in Chad cited job recruitment as discriminatory, with reluctance to hire Sudanese refugees in favor of residents and French-speaking individuals. This exclusion, combined with the limited availability of jobs, creates a hostile environment for economic survival. Refugees describe engaging in sporadic and exploitative day labor, often involving physically demanding tasks such as lifting bricks for minimal or no pay, which further underscores their vulnerability.

“The lack of income has cascading effects, impacting their ability to afford necessities such as food, continue their education, and support their siblings.”

While they noted the availability of food items provided by humanitarian organizations, these supplies do not fulfill their daily needs. A key informant in the Kerink camp also noted that beneficiary services don’t reach them.

Language barriers and sexual harassment in Uganda



Although Uganda has progressive policies that grant refugees the right to work, actual employment rates reveal considerable regional and gender inequalities.³⁹ Displaced young participants in Uganda face severe job market restrictions due to limited safe opportunities, compounded by asylum status and language barriers. Moreover, many available jobs require experience or certifications that displaced individuals often lack. Safety concerns, particularly at night, also restrict their ability to pursue specific livelihood opportunities. For instance, previous reports revealed workplace sexual harassment of female refugees in Uganda, underscoring the exploitative power dynamics between employers and refugees, exacerbated by the absence of formal reporting mechanisms.⁴⁰ Participants in urban settings reported relying on a limited, fluctuating income from volunteering with civil society organizations, which often provide small allowances to cover transport or meals, or casual work, such as selling food and coffee. The instability and uncertainty in their livelihoods, coupled with Uganda's high cost of living, led to a constant struggle to meet basic needs, including extremely high rent, school fees, and, ultimately, severe psychological distress and helplessness. Furthermore, a young woman in the Biali refugee camp highlighted the impact of funding cuts on their livelihoods, saying,

"We could not obtain a source of income other than the financial aid we used to receive from the International Organization for Migration, and now it has stopped."

Xenophobia and obstacles to transferring qualifications in Egypt



Young Sudanese women displaced to Egypt frequently mentioned the scarcity of suitable job opportunities, especially for foreigners or those without specific qualifications. The loss of educational certificates has forced many Sudanese refugees in Egypt to abandon work aligned with their qualifications and experience, confining them to low-skilled, often unpaid labor that starkly contrasts with their previous careers.⁴¹ The negative media narratives and misinformation spread on social media against Sudanese refugees in Egypt, including calls for boycotting their businesses, have deepened distrust for newly arrived refugees.⁴² Participants reported that their male caregivers or siblings work in exploitative work environments that usually require long hours and low returns.

"Other participants noted that their skills or qualifications are not easily transferable or recognized in the Egyptian job market."

For instance, a participant described facing gender-specific challenges in finding "respectful work," including pressure to dress or behave in ways that conflict with her values.

Education

Disruption of education exacerbates the limited livelihood opportunities for young women. Their current educational experiences reveal a landscape marked by profound disruption, significant financial barriers, and unavailable educational infrastructure, particularly in displacement camps in West Kordofan.

Poor education infrastructure in West Kordofan



Sudan is generally characterized by educational inequalities, with stark regional disparities between the center and peripheries, contributing to underdevelopment in western regions.⁴³ Even before the war, young women from West Darfur and West Kordofan faced severe disruptions to their education, due to historic conflict, a poor economic situation, the threat of GBV, and a lack of available schools, making them considerably older than other Sudanese participants from different regions, despite being at the same educational levels. Other cultural and traditional views of women's roles, such as domestic responsibilities or marriage, also contributed to fewer girls attending and remaining in school.⁴⁴ One participant said, "Before the war, I finished my sixth grade, then paused to get married. I want to continue my education now if I [was] offered the chance."

The critical lack of educational infrastructure in West Kordofan is currently cited as the most pressing issue for participants displaced in Al-Nuhud locality. This absence is compounded by significant financial constraints, rendering education unaffordable for many. One participant said, "We don't have the means to continue my education here." In West Kordofan, the lack of financial resources prevents these young women from considering relocation to areas where educational institutions might be available. Beyond these tangible obstacles, participants also highlighted a general scarcity of diverse educational opportunities within their current environments, indicating a need for a broader range of learning programs beyond basic schooling for them and their siblings, such as learning the Koran, as well as Arabic and English language classes. Many universities' infrastructure, including various facilities and administrative offices, has been destroyed, resulting in the loss of access to students' digitized copies of academic records and certificates.⁴⁵

"Thus, the frequent demand for verified educational documents from foreign universities severely jeopardizes students' access to educational funding and scholarships outside Sudan."

Certain Sudanese universities have integrated e-learning and distance education methods, allowing students to pursue their studies online.⁴⁶ However, students are still required to visit examination centers located in safe cities across northern and eastern Sudan, as part of collaborative agreements with universities in those regions.⁴⁷ A young woman who was enrolled in a university in Sudan before the war said,

“After the resumption of education, universities opened in Sudan at very, very high prices, [which] besides having to go back to Port Sudan to sit for exams, made it challenging to continue my degree.”

Furthermore, continued violence, internet outages, and massive displacement have prevented students and universities in western regions from resuming higher education.⁴⁸ The increased university fees and inaccessible examination centers for young women who fled to neighbouring countries severely impeded their ability to resume their education. One participant said, “The education fees have become very high, to the point that makes you not able to enrol or study.”

Barriers to education for refugees in Egypt, Uganda, and Chad

Economic hardships caused by displacement are the primary reason young Sudanese women are unable to continue their education in Chad, Uganda, and Egypt. The high cost of education, particularly private schooling, coupled with the loss of livelihoods and the burden of supporting families, creates an insurmountable barrier for young women displaced to Chad. One participant in Chad said, “I was previously studying at university, but currently I am facing financial difficulties in accessing education.” For some, health issues, such as injuries sustained during the conflict and sexual assaults, further compound their difficulties, hindering their ability to resume their education. However, young women in Uganda consistently and overwhelmingly cited the language barrier, along with financial barriers, as challenges that impede their ability to enroll in and succeed in the Ugandan education system. For instance, one participant said,

“I registered in a Ugandan school, but I faced language challenges and high costs, and couldn’t complete my enrollment.”

A participant in Kampala said, “The challenge is the lack of scholarship opportunities, as well as the high cost of tuition fees and living expenses for students, such as transportation fees and other expenses.” Sudanese students and academics in Egypt face burdensome tuition fees, restrictive visa requirements, and the closure of Sudanese schools. A young woman in Egypt said,

“No one in my family has finished university except the older brother, who left his certificate in Sudan. This results in only being able to get lower-wage jobs.”

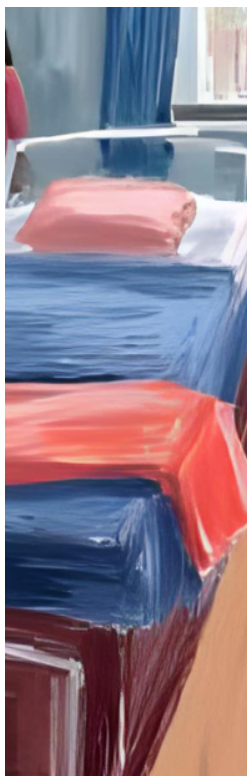
The loss of essential documents exacerbates these problems, rendering it nearly impossible for them to continue their education in Egypt or abroad.

Health

Before displacement, participants generally had access to healthcare services in Sudan, although some reported limited access to these services in the western regions. The same development disparities across regions in Sudan have hindered access to essential services such as healthcare due to a lack of qualified personnel and accessible facilities.⁴⁹ In the Darfur and Greater Kordofan regions, armed groups either control key access routes, block, or fight for humanitarian aid, posing severe access challenges for humanitarian organizations.⁵⁰ Human rights violation survivors and those affected by the conflict in Sudan have limited access to mental health support, and survivor-centered healthcare is inadequate in several states.⁵¹

An absence of healthcare services in West Kordofan

In West Kordofan, young women consistently answered “no” when asked if they had accessed other health services since arriving at the displacement camps in the Al-Nuhud locality. They cited “no services available” or “nothing was provided for health issues here” as the primary reasons. One participant in West Kordofan said, “Many people are sick here and don’t have any medication.” Participants noted the lack of available bathrooms in the camp and their loss of access to clothes. The absence of proper shelter, with families sleeping on the ground without cover, exposes them to harsh environmental conditions and potential health hazards.



Overburdened health systems in Chad

The World Health Organization reported that the massive influx of refugees into eastern Chad has critically strained health systems, causing widespread disease and disrupting access to care.⁵² While some participants acknowledged the availability of health services, there are consistent reports of limitations, including a lack of specialized medical care, proper examination laboratories, unavailable medication supplies for mental health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and slow response times to access routine health care.

Unaffordable healthcare services in Uganda and Egypt

The accessibility of general healthcare in urban Ugandan settings is perceived differently from that in Sudan, with clinics are more readily available in Uganda and geographically accessible. However, the cost of treatment is a significant barrier to accessing medical care for young women in both Egypt and Uganda. Young women in refugee settings reported not having been able to access health services since their arrival due to limited available services and financial barriers. In Egypt, young women reported that while healthcare services were available, they remained inaccessible due to financial obstacles. Several young women expressed that they were unable to access healthcare despite developing health conditions after displacement.

Sexual and reproductive health

Access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services post-displacement is particularly concerning. The limited and inconsistent provision of necessities such as sanitary pads, often through local initiatives rather than established organizations, underscores the inadequacy of current SRH support for displaced individuals.

One participant was pregnant before displacement and had to flee the conflict in Babanosa locality to Al-Nuhud locality in West Kordofan, where she gave birth in a non-hospital setting without adequate medical support. She noted, “I arrived at the camp while pregnant and gave birth there without any hospital assistance or medical services. I didn’t receive any pain relief,

soap, or sanitary pads. Additionally, my newborn daughter and two other children have not been given any vaccinations.”

Young women displaced to Chad reported developing new health conditions, while others are grappling with the aftermath of trauma, including physical injuries sustained after sexual assaults. One participant said,

“I developed health conditions because I was sexually assaulted and raped several times. Now I have a broken hand, and my pelvis is broken too. There are no advanced laboratories for examination, and there is also a lack of available specialists, especially those specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, as well as orthopedic doctors.”

Other participants reported they had been able to access SRH services, including treatment after sexual assault and access to sanitary pads, but there are still significant gaps in those services.

While refugees in camp settings in Uganda received free multi-use fabric sanitary pads, the distribution of pads in these camps is reported to be irregular. Furthermore, the Ugandan climate is reported to contribute to vaginal infections, where participants indicated a need for a broader range of SRH services. In Egypt, young women reported having access to better quality sanitary pads, but economic challenges meant that sanitary pads remained unaffordable for some women.

Mental Health

The trauma of displacement, including experiences of assault and violence, has created a pressing need for psychological support. Yet participants’ responses across the majority of locations indicate a lack of access to even basic mental health support, highlighting a critical unmet need within displaced communities.

All young women in West Kordofan reported not having accessed any mental health services in their current locations. The primary barrier identified was the absence of such services. Participants stated, “No one here seems to care about these things; only the [humanitarian] organization seems to care about them, and no one came to provide them.”

“The fear of contracting sexually transmitted infections due to past assaults is a considerable source of anxiety, particularly for young women in Chad.”

They consistently expressed their desire for accessible mental health services to address the emotional and psychological consequences of their experiences.

Although mental health support was often stigmatized in Sudan, participants report a greater openness to such services in Uganda. Several participants in Uganda have accessed psycho-

logical support sessions through various organizations, including the African Initiative for Relief and Development (AIRD), the Bana Organization, the Sudanese Organization for Researches and Development, and Alharithat free clinics.

However, continuous access is limited due to logistical challenges and financial constraints, particularly for refugees in camp settings in Uganda, who reported not having accessed them before, despite their need. Participants in Egypt prioritized their mental health to a lesser extent, sometimes due to financial constraints. One participant shared her experience with online therapy, describing feelings of venting and uncertainty about its effectiveness. Other participants were hesitant to seek mental health support due to a lack of trust or fear of negative experiences.

Safety, Security, and Protection Concerns

Experiences of discrimination and stigma were reported by participants in all locations, particularly in camp settings in West Kordofan, public spaces like transportation and workplaces in Egypt and Chad, and educational settings in Uganda. This ranged from verbal bullying to unfair treatment and wage disparities. The narratives reveal multifaceted safety and protection concerns impacting displaced young women. While some participants noted that their current location felt relatively safe from direct conflict, the lack of necessities and adequate living conditions pose significant security and protection risks. A young woman in Uganda said, "Living in Biali camp is miserable and expensive, but it provides us with security." A young woman in Chad echoed this, stating:

"Upon arrival in Chad, we were received and provided with some basic services, including water and schools for the children. Security is also a great blessing. I did not hear the sound of weapons."

War and violence in West Kordofan

In West Kordofan, the lack of access to sufficient food and clean water creates a precarious and insecure living situation, compounded by ethnic tensions and hostilities.⁵³ At least one militia previously aligned with the RSF in West Kordofan has established a foothold to assert its power and influence, imposing more protection concerns on displaced women and girls in the area.⁵⁴

A young participant in West Kordofan said, "We don't have shelters, bathrooms, and health facilities here. My mother also has diabetes and thyroid issues." Even within settlement settings, the lack of access to shelters and dedicated washrooms exacerbates young women's risk of GBV. At the time of writing this report, the RSF attacked the El-Nuhud locality, which accommodates thousands of internally displaced communities from neighbouring cities,⁵⁵ killing over 100 people. Fifteen of them were women.⁵⁶

One participant in West Kordofan said,

"The road to here was very long; we had to walk for a long time until we found a car and then came here. We came here late, so we didn't find any support. We were given flour at the start, and even in Ramadan, we didn't receive anything. We need any type of support and jobs for our siblings to generate income, and my mother needs medications."

Isolation and unsafe camp environments in Chad

The discrimination by host communities in Chad creates a hostile environment for young women, making it difficult for them to form social connections and integrate into their new surroundings. These young women consistently expressed isolation and limited mobility compared to their male peers, who have greater freedom to move and participate in social activities. Safety and security are also reported as paramount concerns for young women in Um Jarras and Krienk Camps in Chad.

They report experiencing direct threats and harassment, including being targeted with weapons and verbal abuse. The women express vulnerability during essential activities, such as collecting water and firewood, exposing them to potential attacks. The lack of adequate lighting and the lack of security, particularly at night, in camps in Chad contributes to a sense of fear and insecurity.

Cultural alienation and limited mobility in Uganda

Several participants in Uganda expressed difficulty adapting to their new environments, feeling uncomfortable in their neighborhoods, and struggling with the language, traditions, and living standards. They also reported feeling vulnerable due to limited mobility and potential risks of robbery on the streets, highlighting the challenges of navigating new and unfamiliar environments in Uganda.

Targeted deportations in Egypt

In Egypt, the recent asylum law passed by the Egyptian parliament has granted the government authority over UNHCR to determine refugee status and imposed stricter criteria for obtaining refugee status.⁵⁷ Considering this, the fear of deportation is a significant challenge facing young women in Egypt. The lengthy process and uncertainty surrounding obtaining residency permits contribute to a state of anxiety and restricted movement within the country.

The Egyptian authorities reported having arrested and deported several Sudanese refugees, despite their legally granted refugee cards.⁵⁸ Since the conflict began on April 15, 2023, over 5,000 deportations from Egypt to Sudan have been recorded.⁵⁹

These deportations primarily affect Sudanese nationals, including registered refugees, and are mainly due to expired legal documents or lack of residency status.⁶⁰ Women have disproportionately fled from Sudan to neighboring countries due to the heightened risk of SGBV.⁶¹ Moreover, the existing funding and capacity to address the substantial risk of SGBV and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the ongoing conflict remain insufficient, leaving thousands of women at risk.⁶²

Barriers to Accessing Information and Means of Communication

A significant impediment is the loss of access to information and communication technologies. The majority of participants reported lacking access to phones and the internet, effectively cutting them off from vital information and support networks in West Kordofan, Chad, and Uganda. A young woman in West Kordofan said that, "I am unable to communicate with family and friends due to network outages in Sudan." A participant in Biali displacement camp in northern Uganda said, "Communication is impacted by high internet prices in Uganda and lack of Wi-Fi in camp." This digital isolation directly impacts their ability to connect with family and friends, hindering

the maintenance of crucial social bonds that provide emotional and practical support during displacement. Internet costs also pose a challenge for young women in their displaced areas in Egypt and urban settings in Uganda who seek to continue their education online. For instance, one participant in Egypt said, "After the war, I started working on my graduation project, but I wasn't able to get any information about Sudan and the current situation and the destruction that happened, as all of this was related to my research, as there was no information or statistics. No one could give you a logical number that the economic losses were 60 percent, for example, and no information like this was done for Sudan or traced by reliable sources. Also due to the large number of books and legal texts that were burned and ruined, I was unable to get information about any research related to Sudan and the war."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Young Sudanese women have been dynamic forces of political change, civic engagement, and community organizing throughout Sudan's history and the current conflict. Yet this conflict is depriving them of a dignified life and hope for the future. Young Sudanese women displaced by conflict face significant challenges, including the loss of livelihoods, disrupted education, inadequate healthcare, and pervasive insecurity, highlighting their vulnerability and the urgent need for targeted interventions.

The rapid decline of humanitarian support means that displaced young Sudanese women will face greater risks of malnutrition, violence, and exploitation, and will face even greater barriers to accessing healthcare, education, and economic self-reliance.

International actors must increase efforts to secure an end to hostilities, and secure a lasting, sustainable, and inclusive peace. Regional and international actors, humanitarian organizations, and public and private donors must protect the safety and enable the empowerment of young Sudanese women to implement meaningful and sustainable changes in their lives. It is critical that donors fulfil the funding targets of the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan. However, they must also accelerate localization and investment in innovative partnerships and solutions to mitigate the impact of funding cuts.

Young women embody the promise of Sudan. The international community must act now to fulfil the rights of young Sudanese women to access safe asylum, healthcare, education, and livelihoods. To do so will secure their futures, and the future of a peaceful and just Sudan.

Photo by Ola Mohammed, Maadi, Cairo.



A 22-year-old woman who worked as a midwife in West Darfur was forced to flee to Chad as a result of the war. She told us that before the war:

"Life was stable. I was a midwife working in the health sector. I was also responsible for my family because my father abandoned us a long time ago and didn't care for us. His treatment towards us was very rough. So I helped my family and siblings in studying, and despite the many responsibilities upon me, life was still a better situation. ... I have health issues after the war because I was assaulted and raped during the war. ... After arriving [in Chad] I was referred by the social workers at the safe space to meet with an obstetrician and gynecologist, undergo tests for sexually transmitted diseases, and receive treatment. I used to help my siblings with their studies, but now it is difficult for me to help them because they are young, my hand is broken, and it is difficult for me to provide for the family. I earn my living by day-to-day chores and it is not fixed. Sometimes my family finds work and sometimes we do not find any work, but due to my health condition, I cannot work."

Recommendations

1 Parties to the conflict must end hostilities and abide by international law to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian spaces, including refugee camps, health centers, and schools. They must:

- Fully comply with [UN Security Council Resolution 2736 \(2024\)](#), seeking an immediate cessation of hostilities and stopping attacks on civilians and [civilian infrastructure](#).
- End the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war, and implement the [UN's Framework of Cooperation](#), in accordance with Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), to ensure protection from sexual and gender-based violence and justice for survivors.
- Ensure safe and unrestrained humanitarian access across all areas of Sudan, particularly areas that face heightened risks of famine such as Darfur and Kordofan, remove bureaucratic obstacles to registration of humanitarian actors, and end targeting of humanitarian actors and delivery spaces.

2 Host countries must abide by their legal obligations to ensure timely processing of asylum claims and access to the legal protections offered by refugee status, particularly for women-headed households, which face significant protection and safety challenges in displacement:

- The Egyptian government must end the deportation of Sudanese people fleeing conflict. Deportation, and the threat of deportation, exposes Sudanese asylum-seekers—particularly women and girls—to violence and exploitation both in Egypt and upon return to Sudan, and violates the principle of non-refoulement.
- The Egyptian government must implement legal safeguards to ensure the 2024 Asylum Law does not violate the rights of refugees to protection, non-discrimination, employment, and unions, or access to health, education, and other essential humanitarian services.
- The governments of Chad and Uganda must take steps to ensure refugee and host communities are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the 2006 Refugees Act of Uganda and Asylum Law N° 027 /PR/2020 of Chad—including the rights to access health-care, education, employment, justice, and to establish businesses—and ensure that services are accessible, safe, and equitable for young women refugees from Sudan. Particular attention should be paid to the integration and inclusion of young women refugees in local economies, and their protection from exploitation, discrimination, and gender-based violence.
- All host governments must protect the right of Sudanese refugees to establish and legally register community-based organizations, including women-led, youth-led, and refugee-led organizations, that can directly meet the needs of Sudanese refugee communities (such as providing safe spaces, mental health and psychosocial support, childcare, livelihoods training, education, and legal advice).

3 Donors, including government, humanitarian, and private sector donors, must fulfil the funding targets of the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan. However, they must also accelerate localization and investment in innovative partnerships and solutions to mitigate the impact of funding cuts. They must:

- **Prioritize funding and technical support to women-led, youth-led, and refugee-led organizations** in Sudan and the region, including emergency response rooms.
- **Protect funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence, prevention and support programs** which have been severely impacted by humanitarian funding cuts and which disproportionately impact women and girls.
- **Enable access to education in displacement through scholarships and financial aid** to young Sudanese women, financial assistance to universities and schools in the region and beyond to admit Sudanese refugee students, and invest in improved connectivity and digital access (such as UNHCR's [Connectivity for Refugees Initiative](#)) for displaced women to access distance-learning options.
- **Enable the self-reliance of Sudanese refugees by supporting vocational training programs and seed funding** for displaced Sudanese women to establish safe and sustainable livelihoods, invest in refugee-led entrepreneurship and refugee-supporting host community enterprises, and support income-generating activities within displacement camps and host communities.

4 Practitioners, including humanitarian actors, health facilities, and educational facilities in Sudan and the region, must tailor programming to be gender responsive, and inclusive of the unique needs of young displaced Sudanese women. They must:

- **Design and implement programming in partnership with young, displaced, Sudanese women**, as well as women-, youth-, and refugee-led organizations, including gathering gender- and age-disaggregated data to ensure interventions are appropriate to their unique needs and leverage their considerable expertise in community service and humanitarian response.
- **Integrate gender-based violence risk mitigation** across all programming and strengthen referral pathways for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence, adhering to the [Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence](#) and [IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions](#), to improve protection for young Sudanese women at all points of interaction.
- **Ensure availability of the [Minimum Initial Service Package \(MISP\)](#)** for Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Crises and prioritize lifesaving care, including emergency obstetric services, contraception, clinical care for rape survivors, and HIV prevention.
- **Reduce barriers to enrolment in schools and universities**, such as accepting nontraditional proofs of educational qualifications (e.g., digital diplomas, references from former teachers or schools). Explore innovative partnerships to support digital access and connectivity for displaced Sudanese women to enable distance-learning options.

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