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HANIN AHMED IS THE FOUNDER OF THE OLD OMDURMAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE ROOMS AND FOUNDER OF SEVERAL COMMUNITY-LED EFFORTS TO SUPPORT WOMEN AND GIRLS DISPLACED BY THE WAR IN SUDAN.

From Frontlines to Frameworks:

How Women-Led Organizations, Mutual Aid Groups, and Emergency Response Rooms Protect Women and Girls in Sudan

A call to reverse humanitarian funding cuts and invest in community-led protection

The scale of this crisis demands urgent action:

- Over 12 million people have been displaced.ⁱ
- Demand for gender-based violence (GBV) services surged by 288 percent in 2024.ⁱⁱ
- United States funding cuts reduced global GBV funding by 25 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Women run more than 2,400 communal kitchens.^{iv}
- Over 53 percent of internally displaced people are women, and roughly 90 percent of refugees arriving in Chad are women and children.^v
- A total of 2.5 million girls are out of school, deepening risks of child marriage and exploitation.^{vi}

Introduction

Since April 2023, Sudan has descended into the world's largest and most rapidly escalating humanitarian and displacement crisis. More than 14 million people have been uprooted, over half the population requires urgent assistance, and women and girls face devastating, targeted violence. Conflict-related sexual violence—including gang rape, abduction, and sexual slavery—has been systematically employed, primarily by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and affiliated militias.^{vii} Yet amidst this catastrophe, a remarkable network of women-led organizations (WLOs) and mutual aid groups, including Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), has emerged—providing frontline protection, food, medical care, and community resilience where formal humanitarian systems have failed.

This paper draws on the author's direct experiences coordinating grassroots networks, including ERRs and mutual aid groups. Drawing on interviews with five ERRs and WLO leaders across

Sudan and Egypt, this paper outlines the different ways in which WLOs and ERRs have provided grassroots, community-based protection for women and girls affected by the conflict—and analyzes how escalating conflict and drastic funding cuts have impacted their operations.

The paper makes an urgent case to international donors: the rollback of humanitarian funding is not a budget decision. It is a life-or-death policy choice that is dismantling effective and essential protection infrastructures for women and girls in the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

What are *Emergency Response Rooms*, *mutual aid groups*, and *women-led organizations*?

Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), or *Ghuraf al-Tawari’*, are volunteer-run, neighborhood-based networks that Sudanese communities set up after war broke out in April 2023. They grew out of the resistance committees and the older tradition of *nafeer*, where neighbors pool effort for a shared need. ERRs provide frontline relief where the state and international agencies can’t reach, including communal kitchens (*takaaya*); clinics, medicines, and health support; water and electricity repairs; evacuation and safe passage; and protection work, including women-led rooms. ERRs coordinate their work at neighborhood, locality, and state levels. They are funded mainly by diaspora remittances and community giving, with a growing share now coming through direct grants and pooled funds.

Mutual aid group is a broader term covering any community-led, nonhierarchical effort in which people support each other directly, based on solidarity rather than charity. In Sudan, this includes ERRs as the most organized form. It also includes women’s collectives, youth initiatives, host-community networks, and diaspora groups, both inside Sudan and in displacement settings like Egypt.

Women-led organizations (WLOs) in Sudan are organizations governed or directed by women, whose leadership is principally made up of women. Many WLOs in Sudan have shifted from human rights work to humanitarian relief under wartime pressures and often describe themselves as both humanitarian actors and rights defenders—a dynamic sometimes described as the “humanitarian-feminist nexus.”^{viii}

I. Root Causes of Gender-Based Violence and Weak Protection in Sudan

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF, which erupted on April 15, 2023, has its roots in decades of authoritarianism, fragile democratic transition, and institutional rivalry. What began as a power struggle between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti) has become a total war—in which women’s bodies have become, as survivors and advocates describe it, an extension of the battleground. The acute vulnerability of

women and girls in this conflict is not incidental—it is the product of deep structural failures that long predate the 2023 outbreak of hostilities. Understanding these root causes is essential to designing protection responses that are not merely reactive but transformative. ^{ix}

Community protection mechanisms were already severely weakened by decades of authoritarian governance, which systematically dismantled civil institutions and community-level safety networks. Even prior to the conflict, Sudan experienced **chronic underfunding of gender-responsive** services across public health, education, and social protection systems. Reproductive health services, GBV response infrastructure, and women’s legal aid services were largely absent outside major urban centers, leaving past populations without recourse even in peacetime.

This was exacerbated by **norms of male domination and patriarchal social structures** that diminished the status of women and deepened gender inequalities. With no functioning independent judiciary in Sudan, no operational special courts for crimes of sexual violence, and no credible domestic accountability process for conflict-related GBV, **a culture of impunity and an absence of accountability mechanisms** have enabled the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Darfur is the clearest evidence of this: decades of documented mass atrocities against women, perpetrated by the same armed groups that are now operating as the RSF, produced no meaningful legal consequences.

Women’s participation and gender equality provisions have been historically excluded from formal peace and security systems. **Gender-sensitive education in military and security institutions remains inadequate or nonexistent**, including issues of international humanitarian law, protection of civilians, and the prohibition of sexual violence as a weapon of war, meaning combatants are far more likely to perpetrate or tolerate gender-based violence and violations of international humanitarian law. **Women have also been systematically excluded from formal political decision-making, peace negotiations, and security sector governance** throughout Sudan’s modern history,^x meaning that formal protection frameworks are designed without the expertise, lived experience, or advocacy of those most affected by gender-based violence.

These structural conditions, not simply the outbreak of armed conflict, explain why the scale of gender-based violence in Sudan has reached such catastrophic levels. Despite this, Sudanese women have refused to be only victims. They have organized, mobilized, and led, filling the vacuum left by collapsing state institutions and an under-resourced international response.

II. Women-Led Organizations and Emergency Response Rooms: Protection in Practice

ERRs are grassroots, community-coordinated humanitarian networks that emerged organically across Sudan in response to the conflict. Women have been central to their creation, management, and expansion. Their model is decentralized, flexible, and deeply trusted by affected communities—attributes that formal humanitarian actors have repeatedly struggled to replicate.

ERRs and WLOs provide a range of services and programs, including emergency food distribution and operation of communal kitchens; medical first aid and referrals; evacuation assistance for civilians trapped by active fighting; cash transfers and livelihood support; and dedicated safe spaces for women and girls, including psychosocial support for GBV survivors.

Case 1: South Darfur – Protection at the Epicenter of Violence

South Darfur remains one of the most dangerous regions in Sudan, where RSF attacks on civilian populations—including the 500-day siege, beginning in May 2024, and eventual violent occupation of El Fasher—have created mass displacement and pervasive sexual violence. Access to health care remains a compounding crisis. Multiple barriers prevent women from reaching hospitals—including financial constraints and facilities so severely under-resourced that they lack even the most basic supplies. As one WLO leader described with deep sorrow, “many women lose their lives simply because they cannot access care.”

In this environment, women-led networks have served as the primary protection infrastructure for women and girls. The findings below are drawn from an in-depth interview with the Kandaha Women Initiative, based in South Darfur, and provide an insight into the operational realities and the structural barriers faced by WLOs in the region.

Operational Scope and Sector Focus

WLOs in South Darfur work primarily through Women’s Offices (or Women’s Chambers)—locally organized women’s groups. Approximately 50 women’s initiatives and 32 Women’s Offices are currently active across the region, providing health care, psychosocial support, and programs to support women’s specific health needs. Sustainable projects include the establishment of safe spaces, economic empowerment programming, and training women in the production of sanitary pads. Organizations have established their own specific protection protocols for documenting and reporting incidents.

Community Acceptance and Operational Access

Women’s organizations in South Darfur have achieved a level of community acceptance that enables them to operate even in areas under RSF presence. This has not come without risk. Engagement with armed actors varies significantly depending on the individual—some are confrontational, others less so—and access is often negotiated through social connections or, in some cases, financial demands. Operational continuity is secured by proactively engaging local administrative bodies, including intelligence agencies, inviting them to observe activities, consulting them regularly, and keeping them informed of all initiatives. Increased external support from donors is not seen as having any negative impact on security for women and girls accessing services—on the contrary, greater resources appear to strengthen protection outcomes.

Critical Gaps: Funding, Coordination, and the Cost of Withdrawal

Despite the breadth of activity across South Darfur, two structural gaps critically constrain impact. First, no external funding or support is specifically earmarked for women’s initiatives—all work is

sustained entirely by volunteers with no financial backing. Second, while organizations actively network with one another, no single coordinating body exists to consolidate and align efforts across the region. Without that infrastructure, initiatives remain fragmented and unable to reach their collective potential. The suspension of US aid made these gaps catastrophic. For one of the grassroots WLOs interviewed, the immediate effect was a drop in beneficiaries served from 200 to 50, representing a 75 percent reduction in reach overnight. But the impact extended beyond numbers. Volunteers reported significant psychological distress at their inability to continue supporting communities at the scale the need demanded. This human cost to frontline responders rarely appears in funding impact assessments, yet it is inseparable from any honest accounting of what aid withdrawal actually costs.

Case 2: Kassala – Refugee Reception and Cross-Border Protection

Kassala state, bordering Eritrea and Ethiopia, has become a critical transit and settlement zone for internally displaced people and returnees from neighboring countries. The security environment for women and girls in Kassala is assessed as highly precarious, particularly for displaced populations arriving from active conflict zones. Women face layered risks: exposure to GBV during displacement, lack of safe shelter upon arrival, and predatory conditions in informal settlements. Female-headed households are especially vulnerable, with limited access to protection networks and no formal safety infrastructure in most areas where displaced communities have settled.

WLOs in Kassala have adapted to serve an extraordinarily diverse and mobile population. The findings below are drawn from structured field interviews with the Women's Forum Initiative in Kassala.

GBV Prevention and Response, Community Access, and the Role of Women's Organizations

Women's organizations in Kassala operate as primary civilian-led responders, filling the void left by the collapse of formal state and international humanitarian systems. Their work spans emergency food distribution, basic health care, psychosocial support, and protection monitoring. Women's organizations provide the primary infrastructure for GBV prevention and survivor support, including safe spaces, psychosocial first aid, and referral pathways for survivors of sexual violence.

Their reach into communities is unmatched, with formal systems largely nonfunctional or inaccessible. WLOs are trusted by survivors in ways that international agencies are not: they speak the same languages and carry no institutional distance. Women's and girls' access to essential services, including reproductive health, documentation, emergency shelter, and legal aid, is facilitated almost entirely through these networks.

Upholding Humanitarian Principles and Coordination for Safe Access

Organizations in Kassala navigate unstable environments by embedding humanitarian principles in community relationships rather than relying on formal legal protections. Neutrality is maintained

through consistent, nondiscriminatory service delivery, while community trust—built over years—serves as the primary safety mechanism for staff and volunteers. Coordination for safe access occurs informally through women’s networks, with information-sharing and referral pathways established at the local level in the absence of functioning formal coordination mechanisms.

Key Challenges and Support Needs

The most significant challenges identified are the chronic shortage of funding, the absence of sustained international partnership, and the lack of coordinated support for women-led initiatives. Volunteers operate under extreme psychological pressure with no compensation or institutional backing. Organizations require flexible, long-term funding. Project-based cycles that end abruptly are described as actively harmful to service continuity and to the community trust that women’s organizations have spent years building.

Case 3: Khartoum – Urban Resistance and Humanitarian Coordination

Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, has been devastated by urban combat, looting, and mass displacement. In the Karari locality in Khartoum state, the Karari Emergency Response Room and affiliated WLOs have operated continuously throughout the conflict, sustaining health services, protecting displaced populations, and holding together a civilian infrastructure that formal actors have been unable to reach.

The security situation for women and children in Karari is characterized as acutely unsafe. Young women within emergency relief centers face security harassment and active surveillance. Communities have witnessed repeated security breaches, including assaults occurring inside private homes. Educational spaces have become sites of particular danger: a significant number of women and children have stopped attending out of fear of security-related persecution. Active young female volunteers have been summoned for questioning by authorities. Institutional harassment extends to hospital settings—Al-Fatah Hospital, which serves the largest population of women in extreme poverty and acute need, has subjected its staff to interrogation and intimidation by hospital administration. Most gravely, several young girls in the area have been subjected to rape by mobilized forces. Organizations have attempted to provide care and support to these survivors, but their overwhelming fear prevented them from accepting assistance—a tragic illustration of how pervasive insecurity compounds the harm inflicted on the most vulnerable.

Organizational Role: Civil Society as First Responder

Civil society organizations within the Karari Emergency Response Room have served as the primary humanitarian actors in their communities since the outbreak of conflict, responding directly to urgent health and nutritional needs, securing water supplies, and sustaining health awareness initiatives with a specific focus on women. A defining act of this commitment was keeping Al-Naw Hospital operational throughout the war, supplying medical personnel, medications, and equipment entirely through civil society efforts until external organizations eventually reached out to offer support. Organizations also provide vital follow-up care for women during childbirth, filling the gap left by the near collapse of formal maternal health services. Karari,

which hosts a large and growing population of newly displaced people, continues to receive new arrivals daily, placing unrelenting demands on these organizations.

Humanitarian Principles and Safe Access: Focused Delivery through Grassroots Networks

Safe aid delivery is maintained through constant communication with grassroots networks across Karari's various districts. Organizations deliberately keep the scope of their activities focused and limited—a strategic choice that enables more effective delivery and ensures volunteers remain prepared to respond to every emerging need without becoming overstretched. This disciplined operational model has proven essential to sustaining continuity of service in an environment where security conditions can shift rapidly and where any breakdown in coordination could have immediate life-or-death consequences for communities served.

GBV Prevention, Survivor Support, and the Role of Women's Organizations

Violence prevention programs provide psychological support to survivors, conduct community awareness campaigns, and build women's skills and capacities for greater resilience and economic independence. Women's organizations are described as playing a central role in conflict-affected communities: raising awareness, delivering psychosocial support, and strengthening women's capacities where no formal systems exist. Among the key protective initiatives established is a vocational workshop that functions as a designated safe space, providing both practical skills and a protected environment for women. The organization has taken comprehensive legal steps to secure the workshop's continued operation, ensuring its sustainability regardless of changes in the security environment.

Challenges: Service Gaps and the Absence of Rule of Law

The services currently provided meet only a fraction of the overwhelming need, and there is a severe scarcity of support available within the region to address this gap. Beyond the humanitarian shortfall, the absence of the rule of law in Karari has created a secondary crisis: the area is plagued by security breaches, theft, and a range of negative social phenomena that compound the vulnerability of already displaced and traumatized communities.

Case 4: Cairo – Protection Beyond Sudan's Borders

Egypt hosts one of the largest Sudanese refugee populations in the region, yet it consistently falls outside the priority lists of international donors^{xi}—a gap with direct, measurable consequences for the women displaced there. The two initiatives documented here are women-led networks founded and run by Sudanese women who were themselves forced by the war to flee. The initiatives currently operate unregistered, without formal legal status—a condition that defines and constrains everything they can do.

Founded by Refugees, Trapped by Legal Status – and Still Building

Despite operating without any formal recognition, these initiatives have sustained active community networks and built real capacity among some of the most vulnerable women in Egypt,

providing connection, referrals, and informal support where no formal system reaches. They remain unregistered not by choice, but because Egypt's legal framework makes formal registration for Sudanese women an enormous and largely unresolved challenge. Without formalized residency status, these women cannot work legally, cannot move about safely, and cannot file a formal police report if subjected to assault or sexual exploitation. Legal invisibility leaves them exposed to predatory conditions that specifically target undocumented refugee women, including sexual exploitation by those who know they cannot seek redress. The two initiatives cannot conduct any on-the-ground activities as a result.

What the Initiatives Have Built Despite Constraints

Yet through WhatsApp alone, these initiatives have reached hundreds of women. The initiatives have constructed functioning referral architectures entirely through informal means—connecting survivors of GBV and sexual exploitation to specialized agencies and facilitating access to health care and cash aid through partnerships with international organizations and Egyptian civil society. This is real protection infrastructure, sustained entirely by relationships and credibility, with no institutional backing and no funding. The networks simultaneously function as community anchors, providing connection, solidarity, and continuity of identity for women who have lost everything familiar.

Critical Barriers: Legal Status, Formal Representation, and Funding

The most pressing challenge is securing formal representation before the relevant authorities to legalize the initiatives' status and ensure the safety of their members within Egypt. Without registration, planned activities cannot be implemented, staff cannot be hired, and the initiatives cannot grow beyond their current informal form, regardless of the need or the capacity of their founders. Funding reductions have had a palpable and direct impact: they have hindered the initiatives' ability to deliver services with any degree of operational efficiency. These initiatives urgently need both advocacy to support the legalization process and financial backing to enable the initiatives to move from informal networks to functioning organizations.

Survivor Testimony: Khadija (pseudonym), Darfur Region—Evacuated to Egypt

"I hail from the Darfur region, where I was subjected to rape amidst the ongoing conflict. I received support from a women's rights organization, which provided me with psychological counseling and the necessary medical protocols. Subsequently, I, along with my children, was evacuated to Egypt. The organization continued to assist me by handling logistical arrangements for my family and me, as well as providing ongoing psychological support. I had begun to show signs of recovery; however, a staff member recently contacted me to inform me that they would no longer be able to provide any support—whether logistical or psychological—in the foreseeable future, due to a cessation of funding. I therefore appeal to those in positions of authority to reconsider these decisions, which have grave implications for survivors of violence."

III. Lessons for Humanitarian Practice

The organizations documented across South Darfur, Kassala, Karari, and Cairo did not implement a model that was designed elsewhere and handed down to them. They invented what was needed, shaped by intimate knowledge of their communities, by the specific terrain of the crises they were inside, and by the determination of women who had no institutional support and no choice but to make it work anyway. The lessons below are not abstractions drawn from evaluations. They emerge directly from testimony—from what held, what broke, what was built with nothing, and what collapsed when the little that existed was taken away.

- **Women-led organizations are not supplements to the humanitarian system – they are the system.** In Karari, civil society kept Al-Naw Hospital operational when no one else did. In South Darfur, 50 women’s initiatives and 32 Women’s Offices constituted the entire health and protection infrastructure for their communities—with no external funding. In Cairo, two unregistered initiatives with no institutional backing built referral architectures that connected survivors to care where formal systems could not reach. These organizations were not filling gaps. They were the structure. Any policy that treats them as secondary, supplementary, or contingent actors has not understood the crisis it claims to be responding to.
- **Community trust is the most valuable and most fragile humanitarian asset – and it cannot survive intermittent presence.** Organizations in Kassala described community trust as their primary safety mechanism—more reliable than legal protections, more effective than coordination agreements. Trust, built over years through consistent presence, is what made all of that possible. When organizations disappear because funding is cut and later attempt to return, they do not return to the same standing. Rebuilding after abandonment takes far longer than the original relationship did.
- **Operational discipline and focused scope are features, not limitations – and the system must stop punishing organizations for them.** The Karari Emergency Response Room deliberately keeps the scope of its activities focused and limited—a strategic choice to ensure volunteers remain fully prepared to respond to specific emerging needs. This discipline is a form of resilience. Organizations that overreach under funding pressure become brittle and unpredictable. Those that maintain operational boundaries remain responsive, trusted, and present. The humanitarian system’s tendency to demand scale or diversified operations as a condition of continued funding actively undermines this model.
- **Legal status is a protection intervention.** The Cairo initiatives document with precision what the absence of legal registration means: no on-the-ground activities, no police reporting for GBV survivors, no ability to hire staff, no access to funding—and a population of women who cannot work, cannot move freely, and cannot seek legal redress. Advocacy for the formal registration and legal protection of refugee-led organizations must be treated as a core humanitarian function and be funded, resourced, and prioritized as such.
- **Volunteers are not an inexhaustible resource, and the system’s reliance on their sacrifice is a structural failure.** In South Darfur, volunteers reported significant

psychological distress when funding cuts prevented them from continuing to support their communities—a human cost that rarely appears in impact assessments and never appears in funding decisions. In Karari, organizations are sustained by women who are themselves survivors, themselves displaced, sometimes themselves targets of the violence they are trying to prevent—and they receive no compensation, no institutional support, and no protection when the system fails them. Volunteer burnout destroys the very infrastructure that the humanitarian system most depends on and least supports.

IV. Recommendations

The women documented in this brief have already told the international community exactly what they need. They have said it clearly, specifically, and repeatedly—in South Darfur, in Kassala, in Karari, and in Cairo. The recommendations below do not interpret or generalize their testimony. They translate it, directly, into demands addressed to those with the power to act.

To the US Government

1. **Reinstate GBV humanitarian funding immediately.** The US previously provided 25 percent of all global GBV humanitarian funding. Its withdrawal has directly halted survivor case management, safe spaces, and legal aid for the world's largest displaced population.
2. **Require meaningful inclusion of Sudanese women in all peace and governance processes.** US influence over the Jeddah and Geneva processes must be exercised to require 50 percent women's representation in all formal negotiation delegations and transitional governance structures.

To Donor Governments and International Humanitarian Actors

1. **Bridge the funding gap left by US withdrawal without delay.** European Union member states, the United Kingdom, Gulf donors, and other governments must urgently scale their contributions to Sudan's GBV and protection response.
2. **Channel a minimum of 25 percent of Sudan humanitarian funding directly to local organizations, WLOs, and ERRs.** Consistent with Grand Bargain commitments, this funding must reach local actors as primary grantees—not filtered through layers of international intermediaries that consume resources and slow response. Simplified due diligence frameworks must be urgently developed.
3. **Provide multi-year, flexible, core funding to WLOs and ERRs.** Every organization in this brief identified short-term, project-based funding as actively harmful to their operations. Multi-year core support is essential to sustaining civilian protection systems before, during, and after crises.
4. **Integrate Sudanese women leaders into all humanitarian coordination mechanisms as full participants.** Cluster bodies, inter-agency mechanisms, and donor forums must

include WLO and ERR coordinators as decision makers, not consultees.

5. **Expand support to Sudan's neighboring countries hosting displaced Sudanese populations.** Egypt hosts the largest population of Sudanese refugees of any neighboring country, yet it consistently falls outside donor priority lists. The legal barriers facing Sudanese women there are severe and largely undocumented. This is a direct extension of the same protection crisis unfolding inside Sudan.
6. **Support the legal registration of refugee-led organizations in host countries.** Advocacy and financial support for the legal formalization of unregistered refugee-led initiatives—particularly in Egypt—must be recognized as a core protection intervention.

Conclusion

Sudanese women did not wait for permission, or for funding, or for the international community to arrive. In South Darfur, they organized nightly protection patrols and negotiated directly with armed groups to secure passage for civilians. In Kassala, they trained midwives and built early warning systems and documented GBV at a scale formal actors could not reach. In Karari, they kept a hospital open through a war with their own hands. In Cairo, they built referral networks and mutual support systems from a WhatsApp group, with no registration, no offices, and no budget—because the women they were trying to reach had nowhere else to go. This is not resilience as a compliment. It is resilience as a condemnation of every system that forced it. These women should not have had to build any of this. They built it because no one else did.

Women-led humanitarian networks, once dismantled by funding collapse, do not simply restart when money returns. The trained volunteers, the community trust, the referral relationships, the institutional knowledge of who is where and what they need—these are built over years and destroyed in weeks. In Karari, volunteers who have absorbed three years of war, grief, and uncompensated labor are approaching a limit that no institution is tracking, and no funding line protects. The destruction is happening now, not in the future. The organizations in this brief are asking for one thing: to be allowed to continue. The cost of making that possible is a fraction of the cost of what follows if they are not. The women of Sudan have done everything that can be asked of anyone. The only question left is whether the world will do its part.

Endnotes

ⁱ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Sudan Humanitarian Update*, December 2024, <https://www.unocha.org>. See also ACAPS, *Sudan Crisis Overview*, March 2025, <https://www.acaps.org/en/countries/sudan>; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Sudan Country Page,” 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work/countries/sudan>.

ⁱⁱ UN Women, “Alarming 288 Per Cent Rise in Demand for Gender-Based Violence Services in the Last 12 Months in Sudan,” December 17, 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/12/alarming-288-per-cent-rise-in-demand-for-gender-based-violence-services-in-the-last-12-months-in-sudan>. Primary data: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Sudan, *Emergency Situation Report No. 18*, November 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/unfpa-sudan-emergency-situation-report-no-18-november-2024>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Women’s Refugee Commission, *How US Aid Cuts Are Threatening GBV Prevention and Response*, June 2025, <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/How-US-Aid-Cuts-Are-Threatening-GBV-Prevention-and-Response.pdf>. Since tracking began in 2021, US contributions accounted for over one-quarter of total GBV sector funding; nearly \$400 million in United States Agency for International Development and State Department GBV grants were terminated from January 2025.

^{iv} The 2,400+ figure reflects the broader *takaaya* (communal kitchen) network across Sudan, including ERR-run kitchens and community-operated *takaaya*. Under the Biden administration, ERRs operated close to 1,500 kitchens; the wider network brings the total significantly higher. See “Sudan’s Takaaya Community Kitchens Collapsing as Population Starves,” *Middle East Eye*, November 6, 2025, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/takaaya-community-kitchens-sudan-verge-collapse>; Islamic Relief Worldwide, *Takaaya: How Community Kitchens Offer a Local Lifeline to Sudan’s Hunger Crisis*, November 2025, <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Takaaya.pdf>. For the most current operational data, see also Mutual Aid Sudan Coalition, <https://www.mutualaidsudan.org>.

^v UN Women, “Two Years of Relentless Conflict in Sudan Have Triggered the World’s Worst Humanitarian Crisis for 6 Million Displaced Women and Girls,” April 10, 2025, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/04/two-years-of-relentless-conflict-in-sudan-have-triggered-the-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis-for-6-million-displaced-women-and-girls>. For Chad figures, see UNHCR, “Unrelenting Violence in Sudan Drives Continued Refugee Exodus,” November 8, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/unrelenting-violence-sudan-drives-continued-refugee-exodus>. UNHCR describes the majority of the 700,000+ Sudanese refugees in Chad as women and children; the “roughly 90 percent” figure is consistent with UNHCR data across multiple situation reports.

^{vi} UN Women, *Gender Alert No. 1: Women and Girls of Sudan—Fortitude amid the Flame of War*, September 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/gender-alert-women-and-girls-of-sudan-fortitude-amid-the-flame-of-war>. See also UN Women, *Gender Alert No. 2: No Excuse—Calling for an End to Gender-Based Violence in Sudan*, December 17, 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/12/gender-alert-no-excuse-calling-for-an-end-to-gender-based-violence-in-sudan>.

^{vii} MSF, “Sexual Violence in Sudan’s War: Special MSF Report Uncovers Systematic Attacks,” March 31, 2026, <https://msf.org.uk/article/sexual-violence-sudans-war-special-msf-report-uncovers-systematic-attacks>. See also Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Sudan: Experts Denounce Systematic Attacks on Women and Girls,” May 14, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/sudan-experts-denounce-systematic-attacks-women-and-girls>.

^{viii} Samia al-Nagar and Liv Tønnessen, *From Emergency Response to Feminist Action: The Evolving Role of Women Led Organizations in Sudan*, February 2026, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/9830-from-emergency-response-to-feminist-action-the-evolving-role-of-women-led-organizations-in-sudan>.

^{ix} For an overview of structural causes of protection failures in Sudan, see United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan*, A/HRC/57/23, 2024, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4071359?v=pdf>;

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), *There Is Something I Want to Tell You: Surviving the Sexual Violence Crisis in Darfur*, March 2026, <https://www.msf.org/msf-report-finds-no-safe-places-women-and-girls-darfur>.

^x UN Women, “For Lasting Peace in Sudan, Women Must Lead Peace Efforts,” April 9, 2025, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2025/04/for-lasting-peace-in-sudan-women-must-lead-peace-efforts>. See also Sonia D’Addario, “Women-Led Peace-Building in Sudan: When Will the World Recognize the Struggle?” The Organization for World Peace, November 3, 2025, <https://theowp.org/reports/women-led-peace-building-in-sudan-when-will-the-world-recognize-the-struggle>. Note: The Jeddah negotiations of May 2023 and the Geneva process of 2024 did not include a single woman representative.

^{xi}For documentation of Egypt’s status as an underfunded host country for Sudanese refugees, see UNHCR, “Sudan Situation,” data portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation>; and field research conducted by the author with Sudanese women-led initiatives in Cairo, 2024–2025.



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