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Children and Young People in Sudan

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Please help us to improve and to measure the impact of our publications. We would be extremely grateful for any comments and feedback as to how the reports have been used in the refugee status and statelessness determination process, or beyond. If you would like to provide feedback, please contact: info@asylos.eu

Who we are

Asylos is a global network of volunteers providing free-of-charge Country of Origin Information (COI) research for lawyers helping people seeking international protection with their claim. Asylos works to ensure that people seeking international protection and their legal counsel have access to crucial sources and data to substantiate their claim. Asylos volunteers and staff use their research and language skills to access detailed information. More information can be found on Asylos' [website](#).

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Report overview

Explanatory note

This Country of Origin Information (COI) report describes the current situation of children and young People in Sudan. In the report, the definition of a child aligns with Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol¹ and Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)², in which both uniformly define a child as any human being below the age of 18 years. However, where possible we have also included information on young people (18-24 years), as this is often a gap in COI evidence. The reports' desk-based research is based on a variety of written sources that were published between September 1, 2022, and September 1, 2023. To address information gaps identified during the initial COI desk research, a total of six experts with specialised knowledge in child protection and Sudan were interviewed and corresponded with between February and June 2024.

Using Asylos' Principles Document³ which provides a list of relevant terms and phrases in English, Arabic, and French along with a glossary of legal terminology published by MiCLU (the Migrant Children's Legal Unit at Islington Law Centre)⁴, the following 'legal' terms were used during the desk research:

- **Child/Children:** According to UK law, a child is anyone under the age of 18 years.
- **Young Person/People:** a young person generally means anyone aged 18-24.
- **Unaccompanied minor or unaccompanied child:** This term is used a lot in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. A child who is under 18 years and does not have any parent or responsible older adult to look after them can be described as an unaccompanied minor or unaccompanied child. In the UK, the local authority will be responsible for their care and providing them with a home if the child's age is accepted as being under 18 and they are in need.
- **Separated child:** A person under 18 who is not living with their parent or main caregiver is known as a separated child.

The Terms of Reference of the report is divided into five core sections. Each section highlights critical issues relevant to protection claims from children and young people, including risks posed by both state and non-state actors. The contents of each section are as follows:

Part A: This part provides an overview of the ongoing conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and its impact on children.

Part B: This section covers basic legal information, child rights conventions and protocols, the Children's Code and National Strategy, and Sudan's Child Protection System and Policies. It also covers roles of coordinating bodies and independent institutions, non-governmental organisations, and civil society. The section also addresses legal protection within the justice system, the child protection system, and alternative care in Sudan. Relevant statistics on children in different systems are provided, along with information on the rights and freedoms of children, including nationality and citizenship rights. Furthermore, the section highlights general principles such as non-discrimination (including children of minorities and indigenous people), the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, and concludes with information on civil rights and freedoms.

¹ United Nations, 2000. [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#)

² The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989, [Article 1](#)

³ Asylos, [Principles For Conducting Country of Origin Information Research on Children and Young People](#), June 2024, pp. 23-24-25

⁴ Migrant Children's Legal Unit at Islington Law Centre: [Glossary](#)

Part C: This section begins by providing information on basic rights in Sudan, focusing on food, water, housing, health, and education. It then moves on to demographic information and statistical data on children in Sudan, including the total number of children disaggregated by age and gender, and their percentages in relation to the total population. In addition it includes information on the existence of ethnic, religious, linguistic minorities or indigenous groups. The section concludes with information on family structure, environment, and alternative care, highlighting general family structures, cultural norms, cultural context, and parental styles.

Part D: This section addresses special protection measures for vulnerable children, including those in conflict with the law, victims of trafficking, children in armed conflict, FGM/C, forced and underage marriage, domestic violence, child labor, and street children. It details legislation, policies, current situations, and relevant statistics.

Part E: This part provides information on the situation of refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) in Sudan, including information on the return of separated or unaccompanied children and families. It also provides information on return agreements, family tracing and reunification efforts, and conditions for return.

In line with Principle 2 of Asylos' *Principles For Conducting Country of Origin Information Research on Children and Young People*.⁵ It is important to consider factors that can impact a child's experience. These factors include gender, family background, class, caste, health, education, and income level. These can:

- a. Increase the risk of harm,
- b. Influence the type of persecutory conduct inflicted on the child,
- c. Exacerbate the effect of the harm on the child.

Understanding these intersections is crucial for a balanced understanding of the child's situation. Therefore, when using this report, users are encouraged to always cross-reference sections that highlight the identity-based, economic, and social characteristics of the child.

The information in this report is primarily presented in reverse chronological order, to reflect the most pressing issues or changes, except for specific sections where information is laid out in chronological order and are clearly marked as such. This is to highlight instances where, despite initial progress, certain developments have regressed due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

Top-up research was conducted in April and May 2024. Given the context of the ongoing war in Sudan, we focused on the most pressing issues affecting children directly and indirectly. Therefore, considering the gravity and the immediate impacts of armed conflict on children, we've prioritised the following sections for top-up research:

Non-Discrimination (4.2.1); Right to Life and Development (4.2.3) and Civil Rights and Freedom (4.3); Basic Rights (health/water/food/education) (5.); Family Environment and Alternative Care (7); Special Protection Measures (8); Children in Armed Conflict (8.3); Refugee Children and Internally Displaced People (9.); and Returning separated or unaccompanied children and families (10.).

Despite our efforts to cover as much ground as possible, it's important to understand that our research may not capture the entirety of the situation. In some cases, up-to-date and recent information was limited in the sources identified during our initial desk research, interviews, and the top-up research stage. Therefore, we have included some older sources that predate the established timeframe for this research in instances where the information is relevant. This includes situations where more recent information was not found or where the research terms of reference relate to past events, yet remain relevant. Where information was not found in relation to our terms of reference, a note has been directly placed under the question in **bold**. It is important to note that the absence of information should not be taken as evidence that an issue, incident or violation does not exist.

⁵ [Principles For Conducting Country of Origin Information Research on Children and Young People](#), Asylos, June 2024, pp.13-14-15

Critical information gaps remain, and the most pressing of these include:

1. **Treatment of Street Children:** Current information on how street children are treated by officials and others is very limited. Specific data on the existence of shelters or organisations involved in the protection of children living and/or working on the streets is also limited.
2. **Registration of Identified Child Trafficking Victims:** Information on whether identified victims of child trafficking are registered is not available.
3. **Healthcare Access for Returned Children:** No information was found on whether returned children have access to health care, including mental health care and rehabilitation, or if there is any form of discrimination upon return. Most research focuses on the rehabilitation of Sudanese child soldiers or South Sudanese children, rather than returnees to the Republic of Sudan.
4. **Insufficient research on returnees:** Most research focuses on Sudanese individuals seeking to reunite with family members outside of Sudan, (i.e. family members that fled Sudan or have already been granted asylum).
5. **Counselling or Mediation Services for returning children:** There is limited information on the availability of counselling or mediation services to assist children in re-establishing contact with their families, nor on the entities providing such services.
6. **Reasons for Child Imprisonment:** No information was found on the main reasons leading to child imprisonment.
7. **Rehabilitation or Aftercare Services for children in conflict with the law:** No information was found on rehabilitation or aftercare services available for children after their sentence.
8. **Financing of Alternative Care:** There is limited information on whether the way alternative care is financed limits access for all children.

Disclaimers

We must recognise that in failing to publish versions of this report in accessible formats such as easy read, Braille, and audio versions) we exclude many persons with disabilities from reading it and making use of its content, which is inconsistent with the inclusive principles our [Disability COI](#) research was based upon. Unfortunately, we lacked the resources to make this undertaking and came to the view that it would still be of benefit to publish it in its current form for use as evidence in refugee status determinations.

Please note that as authors of this report we are not legally accredited nor ‘experts’ in the matters we research and so cannot be classified as expert witnesses. We compile primary and secondary information to address certain country-specific questions, but we do not provide an assessment or analysis of the data. Similarly, we do not provide legal advice. The report was researched, written and edited by Asylos’ staff and its network of volunteer researchers.

The Country of Origin Information (COI) presented is illustrative, but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. All sources are publicly available and a direct hyperlink has been provided for each. In addition to assisting further research, the list of sources and databases consulted and provided below will enable source assessments. For more information about our research methodology, please consult Appendix A Methodology of this report. This document is intended to be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to in this report can be considered by decision makers in assessing protection applications and appeals. Additionally, this document is intended as background reference material to assist in case preparation. It should not be submitted directly, in its entirety or in isolation as evidence to decision-makers in asylum applications or appeals.

Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

Background on the research project

This report forms part of a project to produce a series of reports that present new and innovative forms of COI, generated by conducting interviews alongside existing sources. Previous iterations of this project were published in partnership between Asylos and ARC Foundation. All planned reports cover topics related to asylum seekers in the UK for whom an absence of country information forms a barrier to protection. Previous reports include:

Asylos, [Lebanon: Stateless Palestinians](#), March 2023

Asylos/ARC Foundation, [Nigeria: Children and Young People with Disabilities](#), October 2021

Asylos/ARC Foundation, [Ghana: State treatment of LGBTQI+ persons](#), March 2021

Asylos/ARC Foundation, [Vietnam: Returned victims of trafficking](#), May 2020

Asylos/ARC Foundation, [Albania: Trafficked Boys and Young Men](#), May 2019

Asylos, Afghanistan: [Young male ‘Westernised’ returnees to Kabul](#), August 2017 (Pilot report)

List of Acronyms

Acronyms	
AHA	Africa Humanitarian Action
CPIMS	Child Protection Information Management System
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
CRU	Child Rights Unit
CSW	Christian Solidarity Worldwide
CBHI	Community-Based Health Insurance
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
CID	Incommunicado Detentions by the Central Investigation Department
MEMO	Middle East Monitor
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NAS	National Salvation Front
SAM	severe acute malnutrition
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
TBA	traditional birth attendant
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ACERWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACPF	African Child Policy Forum
AI	Amnesty International
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BMM	Better Migration Management
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CFS/YFS	child and youth friendly spaces
CVT	Children’s Voice Today
COR	Commission for Refugees
CCT	Committee on Counter-trafficking
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CNBE	Conseil national du bien-être de l’enfant
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child

Acronyms

CID	Criminal Investigation Department
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DGIE	Directorate General for Immigration and Emigration
EU	European Union
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
FCPU	Family and Child Protection Units
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Germany)
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FDP	Forcibly displaced person
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
GBV	gender-based violence
GRF	Global Refugee Forum
HHC	Hope and Homes for Children
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IRCSES	Integration and Mainstreaming of Refugee Children into the Sudanese Education System
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
INC	Interim National Constitution
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
Fidh	International Federation for Human Rights
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KCCW	Khartoum Council for Child Welfare
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
MASSS	Ministère des affaires sociales et de la sécurité sociale
MINEMA	MINEMA: Ministry in charge of Emergency Management
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MJ	Ministry of Justice
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NCCT	National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking
NRSDC	National Refugee Status Determination Committee
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLWD	Persons living with disabilities
PULP	Pretoria University Law Press
PSVI	Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio

Acronyms

RSF	Rapid Support Forces
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
REAN	Return and Emigration Assistance from the Netherlands
SC	Save the Children
SCI	Save the Children International
UASC	separated children
SAM	severe acute malnutrition
S3M	Simple Spatial Survey Method
SFH	Small Family Homes
SIHA	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
STCC	Sudanese Transitional Constitutional Charter of 2019
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
CCSD	The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors
COI	Country of Origin Information
EUAA	The European Union Agency for Asylum
FAO	The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFC	The Forces for Freedom and Change
ICC	The International Criminal Court
NCCW	The National Council for Child Welfare
SSOA	The South Sudan Opposition Alliance
TMC	The Transitional Military Council
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	The World Food Programme
TiP	Trafficking in Persons
ToT	trainers of trainers
TSC	Transitional Sovereign Council
UNCAT	UN Committee Against Torture
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
UASCs	Unaccompanied or separated minors
UXOs	Unexploded ordnances
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNAMID	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission In Sudan
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USDOS	US Department of State
Volrep	voluntary repatriation
WHO	World Health Organization

Sources consulted and reference period

We chose to focus on the timeframe 1 September 2022 – 1 September 2023 and so the desk-based research includes written sources published during this period and top-up research was conducted in April and May 2024.

However, as mentioned in the Explanatory note, in some cases, up-to-date and recent information was limited in the sources identified during our initial desk research, interviews, and the top-up research stage. Therefore, exceptions to the timeframe were made for rigorous academic studies addressing the history and culture background that were unlikely to rapidly change. Similarly, where more recent information was unavailable, we chose to include information produced by organisations before the beginning of the timeframe when it was clear that their mandate remained unchanged since. Where information was not found in relation to our terms of reference, a note has been placed directly under the question in bold. It is important to note that the absence of information should not be taken as evidence that an issue, incident or violation does not exist.

When a source based its affirmations on other sources, the original source was retrieved and used, with the exception of academic sources and inaccessible internal sources.

Using Asylos' comprehensive Thematic Sources Toolkit for Country of Origin Information (COI) researchers, as a starting point.⁶ All web sources were consulted between 1 September 2022 – 1 September 2023, and top up research conducted in April and May 2024. Not all of the sources listed here have been consulted for each issue addressed in the report.

Additional sources to those individually listed were consulted via database searches. This non-exhaustive list is intended to assist in further case-specific research. Anytime they were referenced in this report, a footnote was included.

To find out more about an organisation, view the 'About Us' tab of a source's website.

International organisations

[Anti-Slavery International](#)

[Brookings Institution - London School of Economics \(LSE\) \[Project on internal displacement\]](#)

[Caritas](#)

[Catholic Relief Services](#)

[Center for International Development and Conflict Management \(CIDCM\) \[Minorities at Risk Database\]](#)

[Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue](#)

[Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity \(CRISE\)](#)

[Country of Return Information \(CRI\) Project](#)

[ENACT](#)

[Forced Migration Review](#)

[Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#)

[Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust](#)

[Humanitarian Response](#)

[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#)

[International Alert](#)

[International Commission of Jurists](#)

[International Committee of the Red Cross](#)

[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)

⁶ [Thematic sources toolkit for Country of Origin Information \(COI\) researchers](#), originally developed by ARC Foundation and inherited and updated by Asylos, tab: Children's rights, November 2023.

[International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) \[NATLEX\]](#)

[International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#)

[International Refugee Rights Initiative](#)

[International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims \(IRCT\)](#)

[Joshua Project \[CAUTION: check the mandate of this organisation in order to undertake \[Source assessment; List of ethnic groups worldwide\]](#)

[Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor](#)

[Mineaction.org](#)

[Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys \(MICS\)](#)

[OECD's Social Institutions & Gender Index \[Database and country profiles\]](#)

[Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)

[Oxfam](#)

[Refugee Legal Aid Information \[Post-deportation monitoring programme\]](#)

[Refugees International](#)

[Save the Children \[Staff blogs by country\]](#)

[The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism \(IMADR\)](#)

[The International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect \(ISPCAN\)](#)

[Transnational Institute](#)

[UK Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#)

[UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

[UN Committee on Racial Discrimination](#)

[UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)

[UN Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#)

[UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#)

[UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children](#)

[UNESCO \[Education Statistics\]](#)

[UNHABITAT](#)

[UNICEF Data by topic and country](#)

[United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\) \(Sudan\)](#)

[United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)

[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#)

[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)

[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#)

[United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#)

[United Nations Secretary General reports](#)

[UNOCHA](#)

[Unrepresented Nations and Population Organization](#)

[World Bank \[Country Profiles\]](#)

[World Bank \[Development Indicators\]](#)

[World Childhood Foundation](#)

[World Economic Forum](#)

[World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#)

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

NGOs and think tanks

[28 Too Many \[Focus on practices in Africa\]](#)

[Article 19 \[Freedom of expression and information\]](#)

[Association for the Prevention of Torture](#)

[Atlas of Torture](#)

[Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#)

[Citizenships Rights in Africa Initiative](#)

[Constitution Finder](#)

[Death Penalty Worldwide \(Cornell Law School\)](#)

[Dutch Council for Refugees](#)

[ECPAT](#)

[End Children Detention](#)

[EndFGM EU](#)

[Equal Rights Trust](#)

[EUAA COI Portal \[European Union Agency for Asylum\]](#)

[European Centre for Minority Issues](#)

[Fikra for Studies and Development](#)

[Forced Migration review](#)

[Freedom House](#)

[Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker \[Per continent, click 'Völker/Gemeinschaften'\]](#)

[Girls Not Brides](#)

[International Detention Coalition](#)

[International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\)](#)

[International Rescue Committee](#)

[International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs \(IWGIA\)](#)

[Jehovah Witnesses \[CAUTION: check the mandate of this organisation in order to undertake \[Source assessment\]](#)

[Medicine sans frontier \(MSF\) \(Sudan\)](#)

[Minorities at Risk Project](#)

[Minority Rights Group International](#)

[Open Doors international \[CAUTION: check the mandate of this organisation in order to undertake \[Source assessment\]](#)

[Open Society Foundations](#)

[Orchid Project \[Country profiles covering legislation and practice\]](#)

[Penal Reform International](#)

[Persecution of Christians \[CAUTION: check the mandate of this organisation in order to undertake \(Source assessment\)\]](#)

[Pew Research Centre](#)

[Redress](#)

[Refugees International](#)

[Religion and Law Research Consortium](#)

[The Borgen Project](#)

[The Christian Post](#)

[Waging Peace](#)

[War Child](#)

[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#)

[Women Living Under Muslim Laws](#)

[Women's Refugee Commission](#)

[World Council of Churches \[To find churches\]](#)

[World Prison Brief](#)

[World Watch Monitor \[Reporting on the persecution of Christians\]](#)

Media sources and blogs

[Al Jazeera](#)

[Amnesty International](#)

[Asharq Al-Awsat](#)

[BBC \[Guide to world religions\]](#)

[BBC Monitoring](#)

[BBC News](#)

[Dabanga sudan](#)

[EU Reporter](#)

[Middle East Monitor](#)

[Reuters](#)

[Sudan Tribune](#)

[Sudan Watch](#)

[The Guardian](#)

[The National News](#)

[The New humanitarian Sudan](#)

[The Sudan War Monitor](#)

[Thomson Reuters Foundation News](#)

[UN News](#)

COI databases and government bodies

[Center for International Development and Conflict Management \(CIDCM\) \[Minorities at Risk Database\]](#)

[CIA World Factbook](#)

[Danish Immigration Service \(country reports and country notes\)](#)

[Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(DFAT\)](#)

[Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service](#)

[Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

[Dutch Repatriation and Departure Service](#)

[European Country of Origin Information Network \(ECOI\)](#)

[European Union Agency for Asylum \(EUAA\) COI Portal](#)

[Federal Office for Migration and Refugees \(Germany\) \(BAMF\)](#)

[Finnish Immigration Services \(FIS\) \(Country Information Service\)](#)

[Human Trafficking Search](#)

[Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](#)

[Inter-Parliamentary Union \[Worldwide legislation regarding FGM\]](#)

[ReliefWeb](#)

[The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre Landinfo \(relevant publications include: reports and query responses\)](#)

[U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom \[Annual religious freedom reports\]](#)

[U.S. Department of State \[Annual findings on the worst forms of child labour\]](#)

[U.S. Department of State \[Annual religious freedom reports\]](#)

[U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Reports](#)

[UK Home Office \(relevant publications include: Country Policy and Information Notes\)](#)

[UNHCR Refworld \[Select country > Legal information > National Legislative Bodies\]](#)

[US Department of State \(USDOS\): 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#)

[US Department of State \(USDOS\): 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#)

[US Department of State \(USDOS\): 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#)

[World Law Guide \[Check Legislation > select country\]](#)

Academic and closed access

Books

- [Encyclopedia of Africa, Edited by: Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah](#)

Research and Articles

- [Darfurián Voices, Documenting Darfurián Refugees' Views on Issues of Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation, 2010](#)
- [Eric Reeves, Sudan Research, Analysis, and Advocacy](#)
- André M. N. Renzaho, Julie Green, David Mellor and Boyd Swinburn – [Parenting, family functioning and lifestyle in a new culture: the case of African migrants in Melbourne](#), Victoria, Australia,
- [The Role of Race and Arabness in Sudan 1899-Present](#), by Aaron Kaplan, Ashton Armstead, Fatoumata Soumaoro, 11 December 2019
- [Towards Contemporary Traditional Housing Architecture: Investigating the Relationship between Culture and Traditional Housing Architecture in Aburouf, Sudan](#), by Khalid S. Mohammed Awadelkarim. 2022
- Ahmed, A (2020) [Don't Call Me "awrah", for I am the "thawrah"](#): Why Sudan's December 2018 Revolution was Named Women's Revolution. Feminist Dissent, (5), 242-255. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.31273/fd.n5.2020.766>

Newsletter

- [Sudan Daily News Sweep: A daily update on events in Sudan](#), compiled by: Shayna Lewis, Human Rights Consultant, Researcher, Activist



Introduction and context

1. Conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Sudan

The current situation in Sudan is catastrophic, with escalating violence and devastating humanitarian needs and children bearing a significant brunt of the suffering. It is important for users to consider the information presented in Part A of this report to understand the broader context.

Summary

On 15 April 2023, a power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as ‘Hemedti’ plunged the country into chaos.⁷ Interviewees both in and outside of Sudan, have agreed that the country is experiencing a profound governance crisis, with most institutional structures either destroyed or barely functioning, leaving children without access to basic services including food, health, and education. The government in exile in Port Sudan has been ineffective at restoring governance.

The war has resulted in significant casualties and displacement. Over 13,000 civilians including children have been killed, thousands injured, and more than 7 million displaced.⁸ Many children have been forced to flee their homes and live in dire conditions in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, making Sudan the country with the largest child displacement in the world.⁹ The lives and safety of migrant and refugee women and girls, predominantly from Eritrea and South Sudan, have been significantly impacted as well.¹⁰ The ongoing fighting has also disrupted essential services such as food, water, medicine, fuel and electricity, education, and healthcare, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of children.

The UN reports that close to 25 million people – more than half the population – are estimated to need assistance, with approximately 17.7 million people facing “acute” levels of food insecurity.¹¹ According to a special news report by Reuters, Doctors Without Borders reported that an estimated one child is dying on average every two hours in the vast Zamzam displaced persons camp in North Darfur due to disease and malnutrition.¹²

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than two-thirds of hospitals are not functional due to direct attacks.¹³ Reports indicate that hundreds of women and girls have been detained by the RSF, held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery.¹⁴ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported instances of rape of women and girls¹⁵, some as young as 14 years old and cases of women and girls are being sold at slave markets.¹⁶ There have also been reports of unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers. Dr. Abdullah, the General Secretary of the National Council for the Protection of Childhood, reported

⁷ ACLED, [Conflict Watchlist 2024, Sudan: Setting the Stage for a Long War](#), 17 January 2024

⁸ ACLED, [Conflict Watchlist 2024, Sudan: Setting the Stage for a Long War](#), 17 January 2024

⁹ International Rescue Committee (IRC), [Sudan Crisis Report: One Year of Conflict](#), 12 April 2024

¹⁰ OHCHR, [UN experts alarmed by reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by RSF in Sudan](#), 17 August 2023

¹¹ UN News, [UN agencies warn of imminent starvation risk in Sudan’s Darfur region](#), 3 May 2024

¹² Reuters, [As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves](#), 30 April 2024

¹³ World Health Organization (WHO) – [Sudan Emergency](#), page last updated 16 April 2024

¹⁴ OHCHR – [UN experts alarmed by reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by RSF in Sudan](#), 17 August 2023

¹⁵ OHCHR – [Sudan: UN Committee urges end to ethnic violence and hate speech, calls for immediate ceasefire](#), 16 April 2024

¹⁶ OHCHR, [Sudan, Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts](#), 22 March 2024

that 200 cases of children have been recruited since mid-April 2023 when war broke out between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been documented.¹⁷

The war has led to widespread violence, including ethnic cleansing, particularly in the Darfur region, where non-Arab communities such as the Massalit have been targeted.¹⁸

The education system has particularly suffered, with schools closed since the war began. According to UNICEF, 7 million school-age children (one in three) are out of school, and the remaining 12 million (6.2 million girls and 5.8 million boys) struggle to learn due to inadequate learning spaces and supplies, insufficient teacher capacity and pay and lack of other support, including for disabled children.¹⁹

Additionally, experts interviewed for this report indicated that the ongoing war has paralysed institutions responsible for vital registrations, such as issuing birth certificates putting children at risk of becoming stateless. Basic services, including child protection services, are largely non-existent and have been inadequately taken over by NGOs and UN agencies, which struggle with limited access and resources.

Desk research and interviews

The information below was gathered according to the original terms of reference for the research, but relates directly to the conflict and humanitarian crisis and has therefore been included here.

What is the current governmental structure and how does it affect children (e.g., policies, laws)?

A report by Global Partners Governance (GPG), published in May 2024, reported that:

“The conflict has resulted in the complete breakdown of law and order in which key institutions (like local police forces) are essentially not operating. Responsibility for administering Sudan’s public services was centralised in Khartoum. Given the impact of fighting in the capital and state breakdown, local and state institutions have had to fill the role of the federal government in safe states to allow humanitarian assistance.”

Furthermore the report adds:

“Historically, members of the police and army have been part of organised crime networks or misused their power and authority. This is underpinned by discriminatory practices towards foreigners that are tied to deep ethnic and tribal ideologies. Therefore, as previously discussed, foreigners such as EER²⁰ and SSR²¹, or Darfuris, are more susceptible to discrimination from authorities. These groups will therefore not seek assistance from service providers for fear that they may be linked with security institutions. This interpretation is valid given that all humanitarian organisations and NGOs are centralised and controlled by government authorities, specifically the Humanitarian Aid Commission, that controls access and interventions.”

(Source: Reliefweb, Global Partners Governance (GPG) – [The impact of conflict on modern slavery and human trafficking in Sudan and the region](#), 24 May 2024, pp. 9-10, last accessed 3 June 2024)

¹⁷ The New Arab, [Are the RSF recruiting children to fight in Sudan’s war?](#), 28 February 2024

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, [“The Massalit Will Not Come Home” Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan](#), 9 May 2024

¹⁹ UNICEF, [Humanitarian Action for Children](#), 2023

²⁰ EER refers to Ethiopian and Eritrean Refugees

²¹ SSR refers to South Sudanese Refugees

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 also explains the impact the ongoing conflict has on the day-to-day functionality of the government:

“[...]When it comes to the war, the war [has] affected [...] the day-to-day work. For instance, now 11 months [into] the war and all ministries in Sudan, they received only a two-month salary. In some states, they received a four-month salary. So this is making it difficult [for] the staff to come on a daily basis to respond to the issues of the work. Another issue also is the capacity of the staff at the state level. Khartoum State was [...] always the centre, and all the qualified staff, they’re usually in Khartoum, unlike other states. [...] And that’s why when Khartoum fell down, the people are telling me that they could not manage to respond or their capacity could not absorb such large-scale displacement in different states. [...] also the [lack of] resources [...]for the delivery of the work. The second thing is also the-- in some states, I will recall it. And this is based on my personal experience. In states like Darfur, the people in the different ministries, they got the capacity building through different support from different international agencies. And this is in term[s] of capacity building and also financial [resources are] also being allocated to some of these states to support children. However, when it comes to other states that are not impacted by conflict, but being recently influenced indirectly by a huge number of IDPs, it become[s] a critical issue for them to respond because they have not been experiencing such large-scale conflict. And also, they have no experience in responding to emergencies.[...]”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, interview record, 21 February 2024)

In an interview with Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, explained the current state of the Sudanese government with the ongoing war and how it has impacted children:

“So the country is at war and all governance institutions have been shattered and are currently non-functioning or barely functioning. Since the destruction of the capital, you have basically a de facto government in exile in Port Sudan that has not succeeded in re-establishing levels of governance. I think one of the strongest example[s] is [...] education. And since the beginning of the war, so it’s been now 10 months in a week all schools, all classes have been shut down, so there’s been no back to school in September, and it has been cancelled. None of the teachers have been paid since March. So you have an entire generation and a large number of children that-- I mean, basically, all children right now in Sudan are currently out of school. [...] Other things that can impact children is the very fact that basic services, in general, are not functioning-- things related to protection services in particular. I mean, yeah, just from the government side, not existing, and everything is basically transferred to NGOs and UN agencies that have very little access to people and very little resources to support. So child protection services and things like that are also-- it’s not even minimal. It’s below [the minimum]. I would also highlight that more than half of the country is now controlled or being contested by the opposition of the Rapid Support Force, which also has no experience in governance. So while there is some attempt from the Rapid Support Force to establish some type of governance, it’s been basically our understanding from Darfur, for example, is that nothing is functioning[...].”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Her colleague and Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist, Ramona Padurean outlined the consequences resulting from the inability to register births due to the ongoing conflict:

“[...]One thing to add and which is quite actually important because of the consequences that it can lead to is the fact that because institutions are virtually paralysed,[...] including those responsible for registering vital events. Of course, coupled with the fact that depending on the demographics and on someone’s profile, they may have been more sensitised to the need and importance of gaining a birth certificate as opposed to not[...]. The fact is authorities competent to issue them are not functioning, and in the backdrop of the fact that we are in the war broke out, which has led to massive waves of displacement, some of them even beyond the border of Sudan. This significantly increases the chances of those children[...] becoming stateless. And we have reports of to which extent this is a risk. [...]”

(Source: Ramona Padurean, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 commented that:

“Well, there is no governmental structure except in an abstract sense with the government in exile in Port Sudan. But that’s just the Sudan Armed Forces. There is nothing in current governmental structures, either as we think of them in terms of what power the RSF controls or what power the SAF controls. There aren’t [any] policies. There aren’t laws. There just aren’t. Who would enforce them? How would they enforce them? Where would they enforce them? The current governmental structure is an oxymoron. There is no governmental structure. The government consists of men with guns wielding them how they will, where they will. But that’s the only government. And it’s a government by violence and terror. It’s not a government in any recognizable sense. And that’s why I come back to the point I made earlier. Sudan is on the verge of becoming a failed state in which all of these questions about [the] government become meaningless.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In this Fact sheet, Sudan: Setting the Stage for a Long War which last updated on 24 May 2023, ACLED provides a broader context for the situation described by the experts, highlighting the severe and widespread impacts of the conflict on Sudan’s governance, and civilian safety:

“In April 2023, war broke out in the capital Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as ‘Hemedti’. In 2024, peace remains as elusive as ever in Sudan. What started as a power struggle between rival warlords has since escalated into a nationwide conflict that has drawn in rebel groups, ethnic militias, and international actors. Over 13,000 people¹ have reportedly died in Sudan since fighting began in April — though this is likely a significant underestimate of the conflict’s human toll. Additionally, over 7 million have been displaced, amid a deteriorating humanitarian situation and claims of ethnic cleansing and widespread human rights violations against the civilian population.²

Burhan and Hemedti were, respectively, the chairman and deputy chairman of the Transitional Sovereign Council, which has served as Sudan’s executive body since August 2019. In October 2021, they led a military coup that dissolved the government and ousted the civilian members of the Transitional Council, turning it into a military junta. Although military and political actors committed to relaunch the transitional process in December 2022, tensions between the SAF and the RSF mounted over a proposed plan to dissolve the RSF and integrate it into the army. On 15 April, heavy clashes broke out between Hemedti’s RSF and army troops in Khartoum’s tri-city area and other parts of the country. In response, the Sudanese Air Force, under the control of Burhan, closed Sudan’s airspace and hit multiple RSF positions on the outskirts of the capital.”

¹ This number is a conservative estimate due to methodological limitations of real-time reporting in a conflict of this nature. For more, see the Fatalities FAQ in the ACLED Knowledge Base.

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ‘Sudan Situation Report,’ last updated on 28 December 2023

(Source: ACLED – [Conflict Watchlist 2024, Sudan: Setting the Stage for a Long War](#), 17 January 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Were there recent elections and did they bring about significant changes in child-related policies? (in chronological order)

Due to the ongoing conflict between the SAF and the RSF that began in April 2023, no elections have taken place recently. The two Sources below provide an overview of Sudan’s political situation, focusing on the transition to civilian rule and preparations for elections. Both sources emphasise the importance of elections and the establishment of a civilian government as critical components of Sudan’s transitional process.

On its English webpage, Asharq Al-Awsat²² reports in this news article that elections were planned for 2024 in Sudan as part of the country's efforts to transition towards a more stable and democratic governance structure:

“The Sudanese government announced on Friday that it has kicked off preparations to hold elections in 2024.

The elections are expected to be held at the end of the country's transitional period.

The sovereignty council has tasked some of its members to launch discussions over the formation of a committee that would tackle the formation of the electoral and constitutional commissions.

The constitutional document for the transitional period stipulates that the period would last 39 months since its signing in August 2019.

It was extended after the signing of the Juba agreement, so that it now began on October 2020. The transition effectively ends after the elections are successfully held.

The constitutional document gave the transitional council the authority to appoint the chair and members of several independent commissions, including the electoral and constitutional commissions.

Officials will now have to engage in serious discussions over the distribution of electoral districts, a popular census and civil registry.”

(Source: Asharq Al-Awsat – [Sudan Prepares to Hold Elections in 2024](#), 21 August 2021, last accessed 25 May 2024)

Cedoca in its COI focus on Sudan, “Security situation in Darfur and the Two Areas”, which was published in February 2023, provided the following:

“On April 11 2019, after months of civilian protests, the army put an end to the nearly thirty-year regime of president al-Bashir with a coup. On August 17, 2019, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), the driving force behind the months-long protests, signed a constitutional statement outlining the path to civilian rule. The newly established Sovereign Council under the leadership of General Abdul Fattah al-Burhan fulfilled the role of head of state during a three-year transition period[...] On 25 October 2021, the Sudanese military seized power from the transitional government by a military coup, worsening instability in Sudan.(pg. 8)

[...]More than a year after the coup, popular resistance to military rule continued in November 2022, while the country remained without a civilian-led government.⁶² In December 2022, leaders of an alliance of civilian parties headed by the FFC-CC signed a new framework agreement with the military leadership and other political parties, promising a fully civilian government and elections in two years.”(pg. 11)

⁶² UNSC, 01/12/2022, p. 14, url

(Source: Cedoca – [SUDAN Security situation in Darfur and the Two Areas](#), 23 February 2023, pp. 8-11, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there ongoing or recent political conflicts that have impacted children?

The questions above outline the complex political landscape in Sudan, which has been marked by continuous conflict. Since 2019, Sudan has experienced significant political unrest, including the 2019 coup that removed former President Omar Hassan El-Bashir from power and another military coup in 2021. The current conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which started on April 15, 2023, is part of this ongoing turbulence.

²² Taken from Asharq Al-Awsat on webpage: “About Asharq Al-Awsat Asharq Al-Awsat is the leading Pan-Arab newspaper and one of SRMG’s flagship media brands. Since launching its first issue in London in 1978, the newspaper has established a legacy of providing reliable coverage, quality journalism and in-depth analysis of the most significant global events.”

Various reports from the World Health Organization (WHO), International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNICEF, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Freedom House, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have all documented the severe impact of this violence on children in Sudan. These reports reveal the displacement, killing, kidnapping, sexual violation of children, and the recruitment of child soldiers.

On its webpage “Sudan Emergency”, WHO highlighted the severe impact of insecurity on health care delivery in conflict-affected areas:

“Insecurity makes the delivery of health care increasingly challenging. More than two thirds of all main hospitals in affected areas are out of service, with the ones still functioning at risk of closure due to shortages of medical staff, supplies, safe water, and electricity. Repeated attacks on health care are preventing patients and health workers from reaching hospitals and getting treated, with health facilities, medical warehouses, transportation of supplies, and health workers being targeted.”

(Source: World Health Organization (WHO) – [Sudan Emergency](#), page last updated 16 April 2024, last accessed 5 June 2024)

In a recent report “*Sudan Crisis Report: One Year of Conflict*”, published April 2024, the IRC reported on the severe displacement and endangerment of children in Sudan:

“[...]More than 9 million people have fled their homes since the conflict started, creating the world’s largest displacement crisis, including for children.⁵ Many communities have been displaced multiple times. Sudanese now make up nearly 1 in every 8 internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally.⁶ (pg. 2)

CHILD ENDANGERMENT

At the end of 2023, at least 435 children had been killed during the conflict.³⁸ A staggering 14 million children are in need of lifesaving assistance,³⁹ including 7.4 million children without access to safe drinking water, and 2 million children that have not received essential vaccines.⁴⁰ Three million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition—a life threatening condition that occurs when children are not taking in enough food to grow; without medical treatment, 700,000 children with severe acute malnutrition could die from starvation.⁴¹ An estimated 19 million children (1 in 3 children in Sudan) are out of school, and at risk of abuse or exploitation.⁴² Unaccompanied children and children living in extreme poverty have been targeted for recruitment as child soldiers.”⁴³ (pg. 4)

⁵ OCHA, “[Sudan Situation Report](#),” February 23, 2024.

⁶ OCHA, “[Sudan Situation Report](#),” February 23, 2024

³⁸ UNICEF, “[Tens of Thousands of Sudanese Children on the Brink of Death Before the Year Ends](#),” September 19, 2023

³⁹ U.N., “[Sudan’s War ‘A Living Nightmare for Children:’ UNICEF Representative](#),” January 25, 2024.

⁴⁰ U.N., “[Sudan’s War ‘A Living Nightmare for Children:’ UNICEF Representative](#),” January 25, 2024.

⁴¹ U.N., “[Sudan’s War ‘A Living Nightmare for Children:’ UNICEF Representative](#),” January 25, 2024.

⁴² UNICEF, “[19 Million Children in Sudan Out of School as Conflict Rages On](#),” October 9, 2023.

⁴³ U.N., “[Sudan: UN Expert Warns of Child Recruitment by Armed Forces](#),” October 16, 2023.

(Source: International Rescue Committee (IRC) – [Sudan Crisis Report: One Year of Conflict](#), 12 April 2024, pp. 2-4, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In a 1 minute and 46 seconds video, published on YouTube on 7 March 2024 “*Voices of children: What does mean to be a child in #Sudan?*”, UNICEF documented the following testimonials from children between the ages of 10-16 years old in 2023:

“[...]All our dreams and plans have been shattered. How can we build the future in this situation? No schools, which means no study, no education, no medical service and most importantly we lost our childhood.”- Menna, 16-Years-Old, Egypt

“My dream is to become a doctor in the future. I can no longer pursue my dream.”- Wearm, 15-Years-Old, Medani

“We feel threatened because the bombs keep falling, in addition to the stray bullets that kill people.”- Abdullah, 10-Years-Old, Khartoum

“Since the war started, we haven’t been able to leave the house.” - Raghad, 10-Years-Old, Khartoum

“And the other aspect is in addition to emotion and I mean depression and anxiety, because this war took so long and we are losing hope.” - Hussan, 14-Years-Old, Khartoum

(Source: YouTube, UNICEF Sudan – [Voices of children: What does mean to be a child in #Sudan?](#), 7 March 2024)

In its 2023 Sudan Annual report, the Norwegian Refugee Council highlights the severe human cost of ongoing conflict in Sudan:

“The human cost has been devastating. More than 13,000 lives have been lost, countless homes razed and about a hundred displacement sites reduced to ruins. In Darfur, large scale attacks on civilians based on ethnicity included the mass killing of thousands of Masalit people in few days and forced most of the group’s members to flee to Chad. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were widely used as a weapon of war, particularly across Darfur and Khartoum. Parties to the conflict also targeted essential healthcare, electricity, water, telecommunications and fuel infrastructure.”

(Source: Norwegian Refugee Council – [Sudan Annual Report 2023](#), 5 February 2024, pg. 6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this report, ‘International NGOs Call for a UNSC Resolution to Protect Sudan’s Most Vulnerable,’ by Freedom House, from September 2023, the following statistics were highlighted regarding the food insecurity crisis in Sudan:

“Inside Sudan, over 20 million people, 42 percent of Sudan’s population, now face acute food insecurity and 6 million are just a step away from famine. At least 498 children have died from Hunger.”

(Source: Freedom House – [International NGOs call for a UNSC resolution to protect Sudan’s most vulnerable](#), 13 September 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this OHCHR briefing dated 12 September 2023, the following overview is provided:

“[...]At least 1,500 civilians had been killed, according to the Ministry of Health, although the actual figure was likely much higher. More than 5.1 million were uprooted from their homes and more than one million were seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. More than 7.4 million children were without safe drinking water and at least 700,000 were at risk of severe acute malnutrition. Despite repeated promises by both sides, nobody had been held to account.

“[...]In West Darfur, ethnically motivated attacks perpetrated by the Rapid Support Forces and allied Arab militia had resulted in the deaths of hundreds of “non-Arab” civilians, primarily from Masalit communities. On 21 August, more than 39 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed in Darfur by shells that exploded close to their hiding place under a bridge. Mr. Türk was deeply concerned by the calls made by the Sudanese Armed Forces to arm civilians, including by Major-General Al-Burhan.

“[...]Mr. Türk said he was repulsed to hear of the ongoing epidemic of conflict-related sexual violence. As of 10 September, the Office had received credible reports of 45 incidents, involving at least 95 victims, including 75 women, one man and 19 children. The majority of perpetrators – around 78 per cent - had been men in Rapid Support Forces uniform or armed men affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces.”

(Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – [High Commissioner Urges Sudanese Generals To Cease the Violence and Return To Political Talks, and Calls on Those with Influence in the International Community to End the Tragedy and Increase Financial Support to Humanitarian Agencies](#), 12 September 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this press release, OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published on 17 August 2023, the office reported that:

“[...] While calling on both parties to the conflict to end violations of humanitarian and human rights law, the experts expressed specific concern at consistent reports of widespread violations by the RSF, including reports that women and girls have been subjected to enforced disappearance and acts tantamount thereto, forced to work, and sexually exploited. Reportedly, hundreds of women have been detained by the RSF, held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery.

Sudanese women and girls in urban centers as well as in Darfur have been particularly vulnerable to violence. The lives and safety of migrant and refugee women and girls, primarily from Eritrea and South Sudan, have also been seriously affected,” they said.

It is alleged that men identified as members of the RSF are using rape and sexual violence of women and girls as tools to punish and terrorise communities. Some of the reported rapes appear to be ethnically and racially motivated,” the experts said.[...]

(Source: OHCHR – [UN experts alarmed by reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by RSF in Sudan](#), 17 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Legal framework and protection of children's rights

2. Basic legal information in Sudan

What is the legal age of majority?

A study from the Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) 2022 publication, *“The Status of the Implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A Ten-Country Study,”* noted that:

“According to article 4 the Child Act of 2010 ‘a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years.”

(Source: Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) – [The status of the implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A ten-country study](#), 2022, pg. 303, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In a May 2024 article “Sudan: New Law Amending Penal Code Takes Effect”, the Library of Congress, reported that:

“New Amendments

[...]Definition of the Term “Adult”

Law No. 12 amends the definition of the term “adult” under the penal code to read that “[a]n adult is whoever reaches 18 years of age.”

(Source: Library of Congress – [Sudan: New Law Amending Penal Code Takes Effect](#), 23 July 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

At what age is a child considered legally competent and in which field of law?

A study from the Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) 2022 publication, *“The Status of the Implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A Ten-Country Study,”* explains the legal definitions and considerations for children under the Child Act of 2010:

“According to article 4 the Child Act of 2010 ‘a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years’.⁷³ The same article continues to provide several meanings of children in certain circumstances, it defines a child soldier as ‘a child below eighteen years of age who is appointed, accepted or forced to join a military or paramilitary, regular or irregular force’. Child labourer is defined as ‘a child, between fourteen and eighteen, who is doing labour’. A homeless child means ‘a child who is subjected to danger because of his presence in the street to the extent that endangers his moral, psychological, physical or educational integrity’. A delinquent child is ‘a child who has completed twelve years but below eighteen who committed an act contravening the law’. Likely to be a delinquent child means ‘a child has completed seven years of age but below twelve who has been found in an environment that endangers his moral, psychological, physical or educational integrity’.

The age of criminal responsibility is 12 years.⁷⁴ Article (8) of the Criminal Act 1991 defines the responsible child as a major sane natural person. Major means a person who shows signs of puberty and who has completed 15 years of age. A person who has completed 18 years of age is considered major even if no signs of puberty appear.

⁷³ The Child Act 2010, art 4.

⁷⁴ The Child Act, art 5(l).

Article 9 of the same code stipulates that a minor who has completed seven years of age who commits an act contravening the law may not be considered committing an offence, but he may be subjected to procedures of reform and care as stipulated herein.”(pp. 303-304)

The Study further reports on court judgements:

“7 Court judgments

[...] according to the Sudanese criminal law, which defines an adult person as someone who has reached 15 years of age and has developed signs of puberty or who has reached the age of 18.¹⁰¹” (pg. 309)

¹⁰¹ Art 3 of the Sudanese Criminal Act 1991

(Source: PULP – [The status of the implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A ten-country study](#), 2022, pp. 303-304-309, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this 2020 article, the Library of Congress states that under a new law in Sudan, minors are criminally liable from the age of 12 years:

“Criminal Liability of a Minor

Under the new law, minors will be held criminally liable from the age of 12 years, [...]. (Law No. 12, art. 2(a)(2), amending Penal Code art. 9.)”

(Source: Library of Congress – [Sudan: New Law Amending Penal Code Takes Effect](#), 23 July 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What is the legal age to vote?

The Sudanese Constitution of 1973, states that anyone under eighteen years of age is excluded from the right to vote:

“2. The Permanent Constitution of the Sudan (1973)

Part III: Freedoms, Rights and Duties

[...]

Article 45

Every citizen shall have the right to participate in elections and referendums when he attains eighteen years of age and fulfils conditions of eligibility as prescribed by law.”

(Source: Redress – [The Constitutional Protection of Human Rights in Sudan: Challenges and Future Perspectives](#), 2014, pg. 81, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What is the legal age for deprivation of liberty (including juvenile justice, immigration, education and welfare institutions)?

This study from the Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) 2022 titled “The Status of the Implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A Ten-Country Study,” delves into the legal framework surrounding juvenile justice in Sudan.

“The age of criminal liability in Sudan is 12 years old, children who commit offences are governed by the Child Act 2010 which provides for the juvenile-justice system and institutions. (pg. 310)

[...]Correction measures for a delinquent child are provided for by article 69 of the Child Act. Children who are sentenced to correctional measures are kept in correctional institutions.” (pg. 311)

(Source: PULP – [The status of the implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A ten-country study](#), 2022, pp. 310-311, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) on Child Law Resources – Sudan, the focus is on the state’s approach to managing juvenile delinquency. Notably, Sudan has established specific reformatories for boys aged 7 to 15 and for young people between 15 and 18:

“3. State Party Reports

Sudan

[...]

(b) Delinquent children

[...]

149. The State has decided to establish the following two institutions: the reformatory for boys between the ages of 7 and 15; and the reformatory for young people between the ages of 15 and 18. [...], the problem of vagrancy among girls- [...] has arisen, accompanied in some cases by acts of delinquency. A section of the boys’ reformatory has accordingly been set aside for such girls pending completion of the reformatory for girls at Soba.”

(Source: African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) – [Child Law Resources – Sudan](#), last accessed 6 October 2023)

The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) also shared:

“Chapter I

Preliminary Provisions

Title and commencement

[...]

“Child exposed to Delinquency “ means the child who attained seven but not reaches twelve years, who is found in an environment endanger his moral, psychological, physical or instructional safety;

[...]

Care measures for children exposed to delinquency

68.

[...]

(2) The Family and Child Prosecution Unit, the child prosecution attorney Bureau, social care or community committees, shall take the following reform measures against the child exposed to delinquency, namely :-

[...]

(c) deliver him to the charity committee taking care of children or any other charitable body.”

(Source: ACPF – [Child Law Resources – Sudan](#), last accessed 6 October 2023)

2.1. Child rights conventions and protocols

Which conventions (and protocols) on children’s rights and human rights have been signed, adopted and ratified, including Private Law (i.e. Hague Conventions)? Have any key reservation(s) been made?

Sudan has signed some of the key international conventions and protocols on children’s rights and human rights including the CRC and its optional protocols. In addition to international conventions, Sudan’s Interim National Constitution 2005 also looks at human rights including rights of the child.

“Ratification Status for Sudan

Treaty	Signature	Acceptance	Entry into force ²³
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	CAT	04-Jun-86	10-Aug-21
Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture	CAT-OP		
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	CCPR		18 Mar 1986 (a)
Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty	CCPR-OP2-DP		
Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED		10 Aug 2021 (a)
Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED, Art.32		
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	CEDAW		
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD		21 Mar 1977 (a)
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	CESCR		18 Mar 1986 (a)
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	CMW		
Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC	24-Jul-90	03-Aug-90
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	CRC-OP-AC	09-May-02	26-Jul-05
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography	CRC-OP-SC		02 Nov 2004 (a)
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	CRPD	30-Mar-07	24-Apr-09

(Source: OHCHR – [Ratification Status for Sudan](#), no date available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

²³ Note: Table recreated by Asylos for readability purposes.

In November 2021, Sudan submitted this report to the Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, reporting:

“II. Developments in the promotion and protection of human rights

[...]B. International instruments

13. Since submitting its second report, and in reaffirmation of its respect for human rights, Sudan has acceded to and ratified the following instruments:¹

- Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), ratified by Sudan in 2020;
 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), ratified by Sudan in 2020;
 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), ratified by Sudan in 2020;
 - A tripartite agreement between Sudan, Chad and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) concerning Sudanese refugees in Chad, 2018.
14. Procedures for ratifying one treaty are still pending:
- Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights, 2008.

C. National legislation

15. Since submitting its second report, the Government has issued a body of laws and legislation to promote fundamental freedoms and protect human rights. The most significant of these are:²

- (a) Public Prosecution Act, of 2017;
- (b) Act on the Commission to Reform the Legal and Justice System, of 2020;
- (c) Peace Commission Act, of 2021;
- (d) Act on the Commission to Combat Corruption and Restore Public Funds, of 2021;
- (e) Transitional Justice Commission Act, of 2021.

16. A number of laws have been amended to bring them into line with international treaties. They include:

- (a) Criminal Code of 1991, amended in 2020;
- (b) Code of Criminal Procedure of 1991, amended in 2020;
- (c) National Security Act of 2010, amended in 2020;
- (d) Political Parties Act of 2007, amended in 2020;
- (e) Passports and Migration Act of 2015, amended in 2020;
- (f) Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2014, amended in 2021;
- (g) Trade Unions Act, amended in 2021.

17. The Government is considering a number of bills. They include:

- (a) Bill on the National Human Rights Commission, of 2020;
- (b) Bill on transitional justice, of 2021;
- (c) Bill on children’s rights, of 2021;

D. Mechanisms

18. In the context of implementing international treaties, the Government has created a number of national mechanisms to protect and promote human rights and public freedoms. They include:

- (a) National Human Rights Mechanism

The Mechanism, which was established under Decree No. 25 of 2021 of the transitional Council of Ministers, drafts the periodic reports of Sudan to international bodies

and follows up on the recommendations those bodies make by developing plans for their implementation with the relevant State actors. The Mechanism includes representatives from various government ministries.

(b) Office of the Public Prosecution 2017

The Office of the Public Prosecution has been separated from the Ministry of Justice and has become an independent entity. It receives reports of criminal cases, conducts inquiries and investigations into them and pursues them before the courts.”(pp. 5-6)

¹ <https://www.moj.gov.sd>

² <https://www.moj.gov.sd>

(Source: Human Rights Council, [Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 \(a\) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1*](#) Sudan, 1–12 November 2021, pp. 5-6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

2.2. Children’s code and national strategy

Is a Children’s Code or national strategy/plan on children and youth in place?

In this child protection thematic annual report covering 2020, UNICEF Sudan reported that:

“The Technical Committee of the Council of Ministers approved the strategy and action plan on ending child marriage and submitted the plan to the two councils (Sovereign and Ministers) for their final approval. (pg. 10)

[...]The adoption of the road map for the implementation of Article 141 in collaboration with the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) will support the enforcement of the FGM law. National, state, and locality-level coordination of FGM activities continued under the leadership of the Government of Sudan I. On-going support for integration of FGM into national plans and policies, as well as targeted FGM policies and action plans also remained an area of key focus. With the technical and financial support from UNICEF and partners, the development of the National Child Marriage Strategy (2020-2025) together with the Action Plan was finalised and approved by the Technical Committee of the Council of Ministers and will be adopted by the two Councils.” (pg. 17)

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection, Annual Report, 2020](#), March 2021, pp. 10-17, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Child Act 2010 contains provisions related to the elimination of child labour, protection from harmful practices like FGM/C, and access to justice for children:

“Children’s Act 2010

Elimination of child labour, protection of children and young persons

Adopted on (Date of text)

2010-02-10

Scope of text

National

Type of legislation (Type of text)

Law, Act

Original title

2010

Abstract/Citation

Chapter I- Preliminary Provisions

Chapter II- General Principles

Chapter III- Health Care

Chapter IV- Social Welfare

Chapter V- Child's Education

Chapter VI- Child's Culture

Chapter VII- Child Labour

Chapter VIII- Prohibition of the Use or Involvement of Children in Military Actions

Chapter IX- The Use of Children in Prostitution, Pornography and Forced Labor

Chapter X- Care of Persons with Disabilities

Chapter XI- Judicial Bodies and Judicial Authorities

Chapter XII- General and Final Provisions"

(Source: NATLEX, International Labour Organisation (ILO) – [Sudan Children's Act 2010](#), 10 February 2010, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is specific budget allocated to implement the national strategy or plan?

In a Situation Report covering 1-29 February 2024, it is noted that the UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for 2024 aims to raise US\$840 million to support a wide range of essential services for children in Sudan, including child protection, education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and cash interventions:

"The UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal 2024 for Sudan requires US\$840 million to deliver a package of child protection, education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and cash plus interventions to save children's lives, alleviate their suffering and preserve their dignity. As of 29 February 2024, UNICEF has received approximately US\$67 million in humanitarian funding and has leveraged an additional US\$146 million complementary funding for preservation and resilience of systems for delivery of basic services and communities."

(Source: UNICEF – [UNICEF Sudan Humanitarian Situation Report: February 2024, April 2024](#), pg. 2, last accessed 1 June 2024)

According to a National report submitted by the Sudanese government to the Human Rights Council's 'Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in August 2021, aspects of child protection appear to be covered under different plans and policies, particularly with regard to education:

"38. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with UNICEF on a pilot project under which cash transfers would be made to mothers for the first 1,000 days of their child's life. The project targets 50,000 mothers in the states of Kassala and Red Sea;" (pg. 11)

[...]57. In enactment of the national education plan, which has been updated for the period 2018–2022, the Government has continued its efforts to improve education, following the priorities and goals outlined in the plan, which over previous years has been implemented at the sub-sectoral level. The most important goals are to strengthen the education system in Sudan, to improve access to free basic schooling and to achieve education for all. Sudan, in fact, has witnessed a steady improvement in basic education over the past decade. The total number of schools (State-run and private) has increased by 2,800 meaning that an additional 1 million children have been able to access education. Over the same period, moreover, the number of pupils who completed their primary education and moved to secondary school rose from 251,000 to 336,000, while the pre-school enrollment rate stood at 43 per cent in 2017.

58. Under the Asylum Act of 2014, the Commission for Refugees has set up schools inside refugee camps. The schools follow the curriculum of the Ministry of Education. Working in cooperation with UNHCR, the Commission also provides the necessary school supplies.

59. With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education has conducted a study into the expected costs and funding of providing quality public education. The study focused on equality and on the integration of vulnerable children and communities, including refugees and displaced persons.

60. In implementation of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, which Sudan has ratified, the Government has adopted additional policies aimed at integrating children into basic education. The Council of Ministers has identified governmental priorities for the transitional period, which include 10 main goals, among them that of increasing admission rates to education at all levels and guaranteeing quality education for all.” (pg. 14)

(Source: Human Rights Council, [Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 \(a\) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1* Sudan](#), 1–12 November 2021, pp. 11-14, last accessed 23 May 2024)

3. Child protection system and policies

3.1. Coordinating bodies and independent institutions

Is there a coordinating governmental body on children’s issues and children’s rights? If so, which?

Corroborating the information from 28 Too Many, Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024, confirmed the ongoing role of the The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), in coordinating child protection efforts and implementing international child rights conventions across Sudan, and explained that NCCW’s mandate is not limited to FGM:

“[...] The National Council for Child Welfare. It’s a council being established by the president at that time, al-Bashir, and it’s reported directly to the president. [...] The mandate is mainly to issue policies and regulations in regard to the children’s issues. And they are working in different areas, not only the FGM. They are the ones who are mandated to apply or to ensure the application of the Sudan Child Act 2010. And they’re working in area[s] of child welfare, alternative care for the children, child labour, the child recruitment in armed conflict and armed groups. And also, they respond [to] the child in [an] emergency.[...]”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Meanwhile, Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 commented that:

“To be honest, I’ve never heard of the National Council for Child Welfare. I suspect it is part of the Humanitarian Aid Commission, which is a notoriously politicised and government-serving organisation. It did a great deal to impede and continues to impede. In some sense, its vestiges continue to impede the access for humanitarian groups to Darfur. I can only give you an opinion about the National Council for Child Welfare. And that said, it did nothing. If you look at the experience of children in Khartoum and the urban environments, if you look at the experience of children in the peripheral regions, I see no evidence of a government body that has done anything of substance to assist children in distress. That’s an opinion. But, again, I’ve worked on Sudan for 25 years, and I’ve never heard of the National Council for Child Welfare.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In its most recently updated report on the Law and FGM/C in Sudan, the Research Initiative 28 Too Many states that the National Council for Child Welfare as the government authority that coordinates work in collaboration with UNFPA-UNICEF:

“Relevant Government Authorities and Strategies

[...] The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) is the government authority that coordinates work in collaboration with the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (UNJP), which has been working in Sudan since 2008. The NCCW has established a roadmap for training community leaders and health providers on law enforcement. This roadmap will be aligned with national strategies such as the National Health Sector Strategy, the National Girls Education Sector Strategy, the National Social Protection Strategy and the Gender-Based Violence

Strategy. Furthermore, a Memorandum of Understanding will be established with the media for the purpose of running a communications campaign on the law against FGM.¹⁸ It is not yet clear when that Memorandum will be established.”

¹⁸ Michela Lugiai, Yasir Shalabi, Vincenzo Racalbutto, Damiano Pizzol and Lee Smith (2021) ‘Female Genital Mutilation in Sudan: is a new era starting?’, *Sexuality & Culture*, 25, pp.1,540–1,545. Available at:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12119-021-09823-y>.

(Source: 28 Too Many FGM/C Research Initiative – [Sudan: The Law and FGM](#), July 2018, updated in March 2022, pp. 6-7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there an independent national human rights institution such as an ombudsman, including specifically for children?

In a press release from September 2023, one hundred and 14 organisations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called for independent mechanism to be established in Sudan:

“Following the outbreak of armed conflict in Khartoum and other areas of Sudan, on April 15, 2023, over one hundred civil society organisations called on States to convene a special session of the UN Human Rights Council and to establish an independent mechanism tasked with investigating human rights violations and abuses committed by all parties and advancing accountability in Sudan.[1]

During a special session held on May 11, 2023, the Council adopted resolution S-36/1,[2] which enhanced the mandate of the designated Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Expert on Sudan. The resolution also enhanced monitoring and documentation of human rights violations and abuses committed since the October 25, 2021 military takeover, including those arising directly from the current conflict, as well as reporting to the Council.

Since the Council acted, however, violence has continued to escalate. Fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) shows no sign of abating.[3] [...] Civilians, in particular women and girls, who are at significant risk of sexual and gender-based violence throughout the country,[11] continue to bear the brunt of the conflict.”

(Source: Reliefweb, ActionAid, Amnesty, CIVICUS + 10 more – [Sudan: Joint Letter Calling for Independent Mechanism](#), 1 September 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In August 2023, OCHA highlighted the challenges they faced in their efforts:

“• Efforts to monitor and address grave child rights violations continue to face significant obstacles due to access restrictions, particularly in conflict-affected areas and hotspot localities. These challenges are primarily a result of security concerns and administrative barriers. Moreover, the lack of funding has further exacerbated the situation, as emergency hotspots increase.[...]”

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Humanitarian Response Dashboard](#), 15 August 2023, pg. 10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

3.2. Non-governmental organisations and civil society

Are there relevant non-governmental organisations/civil society such as child rights coalitions?

According to key informant respondents cited in a new report published in May 2024 by Global Partners Governance (GPG), there is a noted lack of transparency among humanitarian and development NGOs and INGOs:

“KI respondents noted a lack of transparency among humanitarian and development NGOs and INGOs. This is due to the intense competition among organisations, government bodies and other stakeholders for funding and resources. This may incline organisations to selectively report successes and challenges or unintended consequences, and can create barriers to information sharing and collaboration among stakeholders.”

(Source: Reliefweb, Global Partners Governance (GPG) – [The impact of conflict on modern slavery and human trafficking in Sudan and the region](#), 24 May 2024, pg. 10, last accessed 3 June 2024)

Referring specifically to the context of Darfur, Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 noted that:

“UNICEF is nominally the UN body responsible. Save the Children is an INGO that has a particular focus. But it’s important to remember, there’s only one active INGO in Darfur present, and that’s MSF. They’ve got a small small clinic in Zamzam. I understand they are planning to ramp up in the area, but the INGOs that may have taken on a particular responsibility for children are no longer in Darfur. In the rest of the country, insecurity is making it more and more difficult to gain access, to move provisions.[...][In] the major arteries for transportation of humanitarian supplies and personnel [...] it shows just how badly the country has been cut off from the aid that is in Port Sudan but can’t move west or south of Kosti, which is just to the south of Khartoum.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In the foreword of the Norwegian Refugee Council Sudan 2023 Annual report, its Country Director William Carter wrote:

“Many agencies evacuated from positions around Sudan once airstrikes on Khartoum began. It was difficult to “stay and deliver”. We had to tread a different path to relocate our country office, regain entry to Darfur, increase support for locally-led responses in areas that we were not present in and maintain international attention in a complex and cruel situation.” (pg. 5)

Furthermore, the report states that:

“The provision of assistance, however, was repeatedly threatened. Parties to the conflict systematically targeted humanitarian assets, particularly in Khartoum, Al Fasher, Al Geneina, Kutum, Al Obeid, Nyala, Wad Madani and Zangei. At least 262 incidents of violence against personnel and assets were recorded in 2023 and more than 147 offices and warehouses were looted, depriving people of much needed aid. At least 20 aid workers were killed, and local responders were also routinely targeted, harassed, detained and even attacked. Humanitarian access deteriorated drastically across the country. Cross-border operations were launched from Chad into Darfur, but parties to the conflict denied access to most cross-line assistance. Major bureaucratic and administrative impediments also obstructed the response in the east of the country.” (pg. 7)

(Source: Norwegian Refugee Council – [Sudan Annual Report 2023](#), 5 February 2024, pp. 5-7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In August 2023, OCHA highlighted the challenges they faced in their efforts:

“[...] Reporting on response and reach in Darfur and other hotspot localities is greatly hindered by [...] relocation or remote work arrangements of staff. The nature of Child Protection (CP), which requires service-oriented approaches and a considerable workforce, makes it particularly challenging to maintain a well-trained child protection workforce among implementing partners. Compounding this issue is the fact that the CP AoR receives one of the lowest funding levels compared to other clusters.”

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Humanitarian Response Dashboard](#), 15 August 2023, pg. 10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this 2023 news article, the New Humanitarian reported that community-based mutual aid groups in Sudan are leading the humanitarian response amid the conflict but face significant threats from warring parties and insufficient financial support from international donors:

“Community-based mutual aid groups are continuing to play a leading role in the humanitarian response to Sudan’s conflict, especially as rampant insecurity restricts international relief agencies from accessing the most affected areas.

Yet the grassroots groups – which morphed out of neighbourhood activist networks that spent years fighting against authoritarianism – are facing growing threats from the warring parties and are receiving little financial support from international donors.[...]

Youth-driven volunteer networks have set up “emergency response rooms” across the country in response to the fighting, the collapse of the state, and a slow-moving international relief effort.

Members of the emergency rooms – which are sheltering displaced people, supporting hospitals, and securing food and water supplies – said their decentralised, horizontal structure and people-centred principles showcase a different kind of politics in Sudan.

In interviews with The New Humanitarian and Ayin Media, the volunteers said they are also building on a history of mutual aid in Sudan – one cultivated by communities facing wars waged by the state and, in more recent years, with flooding and the pandemic.

Still, the responders said they face multiple obstacles that challenge their work. They said they risk being arrested by both the RSF and the army, which accuse volunteers of supporting their rivals, and see the groups as something to control rather than support.

Emergency rooms currently receive most of their money from local and diaspora donations, but volunteers said these funds are not commensurate with their needs, and they are hard to receive due to the collapse of the banking system.

Though some international NGOs are working with the groups, progress has been slow, said Sara Abbas from the Sudan Crisis Coordination Unit at Shabaka,[...]

“There still isn’t enough support coming through for the local grassroots response,” said Abbas. “There is still a mentality that the local response is an afterthought, that it is not really something that is integral to the international humanitarian response.””

(Source: The New Humanitarian – [How mutual aid networks are powering Sudan’s humanitarian response](#), 2 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

3.3. Legal protection within the justice system

Is there legislation and policy protecting children in the legal system (justice for children)? If so, which?

Sudan’s Children’s Act, 2010 states:

“Victim Children rights

83.(1)(d) provision of the appropriate legal and social aid services to the victim Children, throughout the progress of the legal proceedings;”(pg. 45)

83. (2) The Justice Organs shall guarantee to all Children, who are the victims of the offences, provided for in sections 45 and 46, availing the appropriate procedure to obtain, without discrimination, compensation for the injuries they have suffered, by the persons legally responsible for such offences. (pg. 46)

Appeal

75.(2) The Child parents, his guardian, whoever may be entrusted with his care or his advocate shall have the right to contest, by all the available legal ways, the sentence passed against the Child interest.” (pg. 40)

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2010, pp. 40-45-46, last accessed 29 May 2024)

In a national report submitted by Sudan to the Human Rights Council’s Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in November 2021, an extensive overview is provided on Sudan’s efforts in advancing child welfare and rights:

“81. [...] Family and child units in the capital city and in the states also work to combat violence against girls. They include the General Directorate for Women and the Family, the Unit to Combat Violence against Women (which has 18 branches in the capital and in the states), state-level women’s mechanisms and sectoral ministries[...] (pg. 16)

94. Over recent years, the State has been attaching increasing importance to the rights and welfare of children. In that connection, it has taken a number of legislative and administrative measures to guarantee the exercise of those rights and to provide the means to consolidate them within the framework of the integrated social development of families. The following steps have been taken:

(a) The State has guaranteed the right of free birth registration as a way of promoting and encouraging that practice. The Civil Registry Act 2011 envisages penalties for persons who fail to register the birth of their children;

(b) The State has set up an online network that connects maternity hospitals to the general administration of the civil registry via which births can be recorded with a national identity number; 343 of a total of 685 hospitals have been connected and work is still continuing;

(c) The State has adopted a national strategy to prevent child marriage, which is part of its national strategy for children 2018–2030. In addition to this, a national action plan to end child marriage in Sudan, rolled out in November 2017, has been updated for the period 2021–2031[...] (pg. 17)

115. As concerns homeless persons with disabilities, a number of shelters exist in Khartoum state where children, young people and older persons with disabilities can find accommodation, basic health services, meals and clothing.

117. The National Council for Child Welfare and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities have both been reconstituted.” (pg. 19)

147. [...] Amending, in 2021, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2014 by extending the definition of the offence to include all the means and methods whereby it is committed and eliminating the concept of “consent” of victims, who are now treated as victims and face no criminal responsibility. The amendments also envisage harsher penalties if the victim of the offence is a female, a child under the age of 18 or a person with a disability (art. 9 (2) (b) of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2014, as amended in 2021);

148. The National Commission on Human Trafficking, working with other national mechanisms, runs programmes to protect children and their rights.” (pg. 23)

178. The use of children in armed conflict has been made a criminal offence under domestic laws such as the Armed Forces Act 2007, as amended in 2013, and the Children’s Act.

179. In accordance with an amendment to the Criminal Code, the family and child protection units are working to implement the referral system, which envisages care and reform measures for child offenders outside the ordinary justice system by referring them to a community institution designated by the Office of the Public Prosecution or the courts. Mechanisms for the protection of children in armed conflicts – such as the children’s rights unit – which work alongside partners and other mechanisms, are making a considerable impact at the domestic, regional and international levels. There is a move towards establishing a child protection unit as part of the national security apparatus and to extend the mandate of family and child protection units in the police to include the protection of children during armed conflict.

180. The family and child protection units provide medical care as well as psychosocial and legal support to child victims and offenders. The child hotline acts as a watchdog and a (Source of support for children and adolescents who have suffered abuse.

181. In November 2020 – in enforcement of article 5 (2) (k) of the Children’s Act, under which children are guaranteed protection from all forms of violence – the Minister of Education issued a regulation to control behaviour in educational institutions. Under the regulation, educational institutions are required to ensure the availability of a psychologist and social worker.” (pg. 27)

(Source: Human Rights Council, [Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 \(a\) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1*](#) Sudan, 1–12 November 2021, pp. 16-17-19-23-27)

3.4. Child protection system and alternative care in Sudan

3.4.1 Legislation and policy (chronological order)

Is there legislation and policy protecting disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of children?

The Child Act (2010) states:

“Chapter II

General Principles

5.2 (f) a Child, who is affiliated to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority shall have the right to enjoy, with the rest individuals of the group, his culture or declaration of his religion and practice of its rites, or use of his language;(pp. 6-7)
[...]

The Child Act (2010) further states:

“Chapter X

Care of those Having Special Needs

Care and protection of a Child having a special need

48.(1) Subject to the National Disabled (Care and Rehabilitation) Act, 2009, or any law replacing it a Child having a special need shall have the right to social, health and psychological care, aiming at training him to depend upon himself; and the State shall protect him against any work, as may impede his education, or prejudice his health or his bodily, mental, spiritual or social growth.

(2) A Child having a special need shall have the right to rehabilitation, by rendering the social, psychological, medical and vocational services; and the facilitation means, which have to be provided therefore, without consideration, aiming at enabling him to overcome the effects arising out of his disability, within the limits to the amounts allocated for such purpose in the general budget of the State, as to such conditions, as the regulations may specify.”(pg. 27)

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), pp. 6-7-27, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this press release from 16 June 2021, released by Plan International, Save the Children, UN Children’s Fund, World Vision reported:

“Thirty years after the adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Sudan stands at a critical juncture towards being able to fully respect, protect and fulfil children’s rights.

[...]In addition, Article 141 was passed in the Sudanese Criminal Law by Sudan’s Transitional Government, effectively criminalizing the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). This landmark decision was welcomed and celebrated across Sudan and beyond as a truly significant milestone in further promoting the rights and well-being of girls and women in Sudan. We must urgently build on this momentum to legally protect the lives of millions of girls still at risk of this violation in Sudan.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that FGM/C practice is now criminalized and penalized under the new law, it is still commonly practiced in Sudan, as witnessed by Save the Children International, UNICEF, Plan International and World Vision in communities where we work. Available data shows that 87% of Sudanese girls and/or women aged between 14 and 49 have already undergone some form of FGM/C, and 32% of girls under the age of 14 are affected, and girls under 10 at risk.”[...]We acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing promising steps being taken towards the elimination of FGM/C in Sudan in addition to its criminalization. This year for example, the Sudanese Council of Ministers approved the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which states under Article 5 the elimination of all harmful practices, covering essential areas such as public awareness, legal action, support to victims and protection of women at risk.”

(Source: Plan International, Save the Children, UN Children’s Fund, World Vision – [Implement and enforce laws and policies to ensure protection for all children in Sudan](#), 16 June 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this Child Protection annual report covering 2021, UNICEF reported that:

“The adoption of new legislative frameworks, strategies and action plans on FGM and child marriage laid the groundwork for significant policy change. The first FGM case before the court in Khartoum state is a positive sign of operationalising the amendment and bringing justice for children. Awareness raising efforts on the harmful consequences of FGM contributed to less girls below 14 years of age being cut (from 31 in 2014 according to the MICS to 28 per cent according to the S3M II conducted in 2019). A second case was reported in Gala Al-Nahal locality, Gedaref state, where a family member reported a midwife performing the cutting on his niece. The local judge decided on a prison sentence of one year for the midwife, however this was waived after community and family members intervened using the ‘*Ajaweed*’ mechanism to exchange the sentence for fine.[...] (pg. 4)

[...]There has been a shift from fighting between armed groups to tribal clashes between the Arab and African tribes with a dramatic increase in abductions, targeting particularly women and girls. Most notably was the outbreak of violence and population displacement in West Darfur in early 2021. UNICEF Sudan and its partners continued to provide psychosocial support and family tracing and reunification for children affected by conflict and other crises. [...] (pg. 5)

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan Child Protection 2021](#), pp. 4-5-9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Up to October 2021, the legal framework for children continued to improve due to the commitment of the transitional government with more reforms taking place for children affected by armed conflict and at risk or exposed to violence, exploitation, and abuse, including gender-based violence. This includes the new Child Act that has been finalized at the expert group level and the review that is taking place for Child Care Act 1971.

With the adoption of the new FGM Article 141 criminalising the practice, UNICEF in partnership with the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) and the Task Force, developed two costed action plans on FGM and Child Marriage, which are considered as key steps to lay the groundwork for significant positive change. These action plans were discussed at the level of social committee of the Council of Minister but not yet approved due to the political changes in the country.” (pg. 9)
(Source: UNICEF – Sudan. Child Protection 2021, pp. 4-5-9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is legislation in place protecting children from physical, psychological and emotional violence and abuse (in the family, in alternative care and institutions)? How is this legislation implemented in practice?

Article 5 of the Sudan, Child Act 2010, states that:

“Sudan has undertaken law reform to prohibit corporal punishment in schools, day care and penal institutions. In November 2020, pursuant to article 29(2) of the Child Act 2010, the Ministry of Education signed a Regulation on behaviour control in educational institutions (unofficial translation) to prohibit corporal punishment in all schools. Educational institutions are defined as preschool (including day care), basic, secondary schools, Quranic schools as well as industrial education centres, agricultural schools, adult education and special needs schools. The Regulation

includes a list of positive discipline methods (chapter 5) and provides for sanctions (chapter 6). Civil society and partners are now mobilizing to implement the Regulation which will include teachers' training on positive discipline. Sudan also enacted the Miscellaneous Amendments Law 2020 which amends the Criminal Code 1991 to repeal whipping and flogging by way of discipline and as a sentence for crime. The new law replaces whipping with probation and community service (article 47(b)).

Corporal punishment still needs to be prohibited in the home and in alternative care settings.”

(Source: End Corporal Punishment – [Sudan Prohibits Corporal Punishment in Schools, day care and penal institutions](#), 9 February 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Legislation in practice

UNHCR in its Protection Brief 2023, reports that:

“Opportunities for alternative care arrangements are precarious, given the disintegration of social and community-based safety nets. Children in institutional care, generally not a solution in the best interests of the child, are even more at risk due to the conditions of these social institutions, mostly left unattended, with power outages, and with lack of resources and personnel.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Protection Brief. Sudan](#), July 2023, pg. 7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this article “Violations Against Children in Sudan”, published in Just Security July 2023, reported that:

“[...]Conduct in Sudan to date shows contempt, rather than respect, for the rules of IHL and international human rights law standards, with disastrous consequences for Sudan’s children. This situation is not new in Sudan. Conflict-related violations against children have been monitored there by the U.N. for almost two decades. Government armed forces and the RSF, among other pro and anti-government armed groups, have repeatedly been involved in the commission of the six grave violations against children in times of war. Those are: killing and maiming, recruitment and use of children in armed forces and armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence; abduction; and denial of humanitarian access for children.”

(Source: Just Security – [Violations against Children in Sudan](#), 28 July 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In its 2021 Child Protection Annual report, UNICEF highlighted how the political instability and subsequent civil unrest in Sudan have created significant barriers to the effective implementation of various programs, necessitating adjustments and delays in activities:

“The military takeover on 25 October 2021, and subsequent weekly demonstrations, protests and civil unrest, added constraints and limitations to programme implementation, inter alia due to movement restrictions, extensive internet cuts and school closures. Communication among staff and with implementing partners were interrupted for several weeks. Movement within Khartoum was minimised in the fourth quarter of 2021. Government staff was dismissed and replaced with new officials, slowing down the overall implementation of activities. For some activities this has delayed implementation until either the country moves past the current situation or alternative implementation modalities are identified, including increasing implementation work through non-governmental organisations (NGOs).”

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan. Child Protection 2021](#), 2021, pp. 4-5, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is legislation in place regulating adoption and fostering?

Article 25 (1,2 and 3) of the Sudan Child Act, 2010 states:

“Substitute care

25.(1) Substitute care shall be presented to Children, who suffer from difficult family circumstances, which hinder their upbringing, or restitution to their natural families, in accordance with the following arrangement :-

- (a) relatives of the mother, or father ;
 - (b) Maintenance Families, in accordance with ordinances of Islamic Sharia, and adoption in accordance with the Non-Muslims Personal Status Act; provided that the regulations shall specify the safeguards and conditions organizing Maintenance Families, and the categories benefiting thereby;
 - (c) Care Homes.
- (2) The social care institutions such as the Zakat Fund, and other of funds shall subsidize the Substitute Care Institutions and programmes.
- (3) Upon selecting Substitute Care, due consideration shall be had to continuity of Child instruction, in accordance with his religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background, according to his beliefs.”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), pg. 17, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF reported that:

“173. The NCBO report lists a number of child protection policies, including two on alternative care. The 2009 National Orphan Sponsorship Policy and the 2011 National Policy on the Welfare and Protection of Children Not in Parental Care both aim to mobilize the community to meet the needs of orphans (see section 2.3).[...]

195. The CRC’s observations above support the efforts of the National Policy for the Care and Protection of Neglected Children to remove children from institutions and increase alternative family care, in particular through kafala (see sections 6.3 and 6.4). Its aim is to improve the lives of orphans, abandoned children and children born out of wedlock. The family- and community-centered approach, which helps foster mothers and permanent families to take charge of the child, is considered the most promising.” (Translated by bilingual EN-FR researcher)

ORIGINAL source:

173. Le rapport du CNBE liste diverses politiques touchant à la protection de l’enfant, dont deux sur les prises en charge alternatives. La Politique nationale de parrainage des orphelins de 2009 et la Politique nationale sur le bien-être et la protection des enfants non pris en charge par leurs parents de 2011 visent toutes deux à mobiliser la communauté pour répondre aux besoins des orphelins (voir section 2.3).[...]

195. Les observations ci-avant du CRC appuient les efforts de la Politique nationale de prise en charge et de protection des enfants délaissés visant à sortir les enfants des institutions et à augmenter la prise en charge alternative familiale, en particulier via le kafala (voir sections 6.3 et 6.4). Son objectif est d’améliorer la vie des orphelins, des enfants abandonnés et des enfants nés hors- mariage. L’approche centrée sur la famille et la communauté, qui aide des mères d’accueil et des familles permanentes à prendre l’enfant en charge, est considérée comme la plus prometteuse.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Analyse de Situation des enfants au Soudan](#), 2016, pp. 73-77, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is legislation in place prohibiting and criminalising the abduction of children? Is legislation in line with international standards?

Article 45 of the Sudan Child Act, 2010 states prohibits the kidnapping of children for prostitution and forced labour:

“Chapter IX

Exploitation of Children in Prostitution,

Pornographic Materials and Forced Labour

Use of Children in prostitution and pornographic materials prohibited

45. There shall be deemed committed an offence whoever:-

- (a) kidnapping of, traffic in and transfer any organ or organs of any child;
- (b) rape of Children.

- (c) sexual harassment or sexual abuse of Children.
- (d) the production, circulation, publication, import, export, exhibition, sale or possession of pornographic materials, relating to the Child.
- (e) employment of Children, for the purpose of sexual activities, for remuneration, or any of the forms of consideration.
- (f) Photograph by any means any child exercises actually or by imitation express sexual activities, or photo genitals of a child for gratifying sexual lust.”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act](#), 2010, pg. 17, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Published in 2021, Nagmeldin Karamalla-Gaiballa an economist and public finance specialist at the University of Commerce and Services in Poznań, Poland, wrote in his academic article that:

“In Sudan, a special law for children has been in place since 2010. However, this law has been almost idle, and there has not been a positive change in the reality of Sudanese child protection. The reason for this is the legal inconsistency in the definition of the child, and the power of criminal law and its vague texts, especially in determining the age of criminal responsibility.”

(Source: Society Register – [Violations of Children’s Rights in Sudan and their Circumstances: The Current Situation and the Possibility for Solution, 2021](#), pg. 61, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there a legal definition of parental responsibilities, duties and rights? How is this defined?

Article 5 in the Children’s Act 2010 states:

“Chapter II
General Principles

5.(2)

(b) the sound upbringing of Children is a public responsibility; and the State shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and the family, by virtue of the religion and local custom;

[...]

(m) there shall be upon shoulders of the parents the primary responsibility of instructing the Child; and the State shall endeavour to provide the appropriate assistance to the family;”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), pg. 30-32, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do children born outside marriage have the same rights as other children?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 highlighted that:

“Children who are born out of wedlock. [...] They also feel the stigma of marriage and being associated with his community. And usually, they try to hide [...] this [...] when they go to work, when they go to apply for applications. [...] That affects everything.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Published in 2021, Nagmeldin Karamalla-Gaiballa an economist and public finance specialist at The University of Commerce and Services in Poznań, Poland, wrote in his academic article that:

“The abandonment of children born out of wedlock is another major challenge, as three-quarters of children are delivered every day to the only residential care facility in the country.”

(Source: Society Register – [Violations of Children’s Rights in Sudan and their Circumstances: The Current Situation and the Possibility for Solution, 2021](#), pg. 61, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Article 5 in the Children’s Act 2010 states:

“Chapter II

General Principles

5.(2)

(g) a Child born outside the framework of marriage shall have the right to registration in the Birth Registers, affiliated to whoever of his parents admits his affiliation or any other name in case of their denial;”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), pp. 30-32, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is the child protection system organised centrally (national) or is it decentralised (regional or at community level)? Which state authority (ministry) is responsible for the overarching child protection system/services (policy, budget)?

In a series of written responses to questions sent by Asylos for this report, Asma Taha a Humanitarian Practitioner/Expert indicated in June 2024 that:

“The Child protection system is organised on the three levels, nationally the Child Protection Sub-Sector led by UNICEF with the National Council for Child Welfare being the main responsible government body for the child protection policy and while the Ministry of Social Development has the human resources of social/case works, psychologist, etc. The child protection Sub national level on state level exists where there is a humanitarian structure or response in place otherwise it doesn’t while there is a state level council for child welfare but as it depends mainly on UNICEF and NGOs for funding and technical support it often struggles when there is no humanitarian structure in the state. On community level whenever [...] child protection interventions exist a community base protection structures are established either through the NGOs itself or through the SCCW and MoSD. However, the system needs capacity building. The lack of trained cadre[s] and community based structures which are trained on child protection is a gap especially in the states where there is no humanitarian response in place.”

(Source: Asma Taha, [written communication with Asylos](#), 2 June 2024)

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared his knowledge about the Ministry of Health and Social Development:

“[...]The Ministry of [Labour] and Social Development [...] they were all responsible in terms of [...]the policies. In terms of the NCCW is not going to have a cash program for supporting families. This will be implemented by [the Ministry of Labour and] Social development. However, WHO said that as a part of our policy and regulation that we’re supposed to have cash development programs. This is the State Council of Child Welfare [SCCW] or National Council of Child Welfare.

Ahmed continues to share, that:

“[...]But unfortunately, when it comes at the state level, I say that there[this] a kind of competition between the two parts: between the SCCW and the Ministry of [Labour] and Social Development. They kind of compete [for a] limited budget.

“[...]when it comes to working [on] child protection issues in general, there is a national cluster for child protection. And we should differentiate between the cluster and sector. The sector should be done by the government, which I don’t see now. We have the cluster, which is [the] responsibility of the humanitarian team led by UNICEF. So UNICEF is responsible for the child protection cluster, and then with support of other organisations. And we have the child protection cluster at the state level and at the national level. So at the state level, in Kassala state, we meet monthly. But for example, in terms of [a] crisis like now, we meet bi-weekly.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“It’s at the community level, and it’s not funded or supported by a central government. There is no longer a central government. You have competing political factions. You have a big division between the forces allied with al-Burhan in Port Sudan and Hemedti in Khartoum and elsewhere in the country, especially Darfur. But the security and the assistance to children, including education, are entirely a function of what can be provided locally. Certainly, once you’re outside the riverine on Khartoum urban area. And in Khartoum itself, it’s a wasteland.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Collaborating Ahmed’s insight further above, this research report, published by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-G) provides an overview of Sudan’s federal system of government:

“A federal system of government was adopted in 1992, with three levels of power: the federal government, the states and local communities—a set-up that has been corroborated by the new Constitutional Declaration. The current federal system in Sudan consists of 18 states and 199 local communities/governments (UNDP 2013).³ The duties and responsibilities of the different government levels include the following (UNDP 2013; Kjellgren et al. 2014):

- Federal government: traditional national-level functions such as defence, foreign relations, monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies, higher education, larger infrastructure projects, transfers to states to finance schooling
- State governments: secondary education and procurement and distribution of school textbooks, health care in hospitals, construction, operation and maintenance of small water schemes, agricultural development
- Local governments: pre-school and primary education, supply and management of primary health care and environmental sanitation, collection of local taxes. Each state has its own constitution, while the Local Government Act of 1951 provides the legal framework for local (community-level) governments. The federal and state constitutions and the Local Government Act stress the principle of autonomy of the different levels of government (Kjellgren et al. 2014).” (pg. 11)

³ In addition, the Abyei area is accorded ‘special administrative status’ by the 2004 Protocol on the Resolution of the Abyei Conflict. Under the terms of the Protocol, the Abyei area was declared, on an interim basis, to be simultaneously part of the states of West Kordofan (Sudan) and Northern Bahr el Ghazal (South Sudan).

The report also describes the main institutions related to social protection in Sudan:

“Ministry of Labour and Social Development

As a first action, the interim government implemented an institutional reform in which the ministries of Labour and Social Security and Development were combined into one single entity. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MoLSD) is now the main institution responsible for social protection policies.

General Directorate for Social Welfare and Rural Development

Main task:

Providing care, protection and social service packages to improve the situation of the target groups (elderly people, orphans, children, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, beggars and people living with HIV)

Launching initiatives for community development

Providing training and capacity-building for individuals, leaders, groups and institutions working in the field of community development” (pg. 12)

[...]

- The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), established by Presidential Decree in 1991—later replaced by the National Council for Child Welfare Law 2008—aims to set child policies, plans and programmes; coordinate child-care

activities with other government levels; monitor the implementation of international and regional child conventions ratified by Sudan; establish a statistical information system for child welfare; and mobilise international and national financial assistance to support programmes for children; among others. Specifically, the NCCW is guided by the Child Act (2010), the National Document for Child Welfare (2006–2015) and the National Strategy for the Abolition of Female Genital Mutilation (2008–2018). The Prime Minister chairs the NCCW, and the state governors are members of the Council. Each state has its own Council for Children’s Welfare, chaired by the state governor (ibid.).” pg. 14)

(Source: IPC-G, Bilo, C., A. C. Machado, and F. Bacil – [Social Protection in Sudan: System overview and programme mapping](#). Research Report No. 53. Brasília and Khartoum: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, Sudan’s Ministry of Labour and Social Development and United Nations Children’s Fund, 5 November 2020, pp. 12-14, last accessed 27 May 2024)

Does a national policy exist on the provision of alternative care for children, in line with international standards?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared the following insight:

“There [are] alternative care guidelines.[...] This has been updated recently, but it did not come out. There [are] other guidelines on how to run alternative care facilities or at least how to work directly. There is a guideline for overall policy purposes, regulations, and there is small regulation on how to run facilities. The guidelines in general, they are in line with UN authentication guidelines in terms of childcare. However, when it comes to practice, it’s quite difficult to do it because, as I mentioned earlier,[...] 90% of the children in alternative care [...]are children who are born out of wedlock. And as I mentioned, the issue of emergency families and quite difficult to sustain the intervention. This is one thing. But however, there [are] other children who are on the move from being separated. Also, this is part of the work of the State Council or National Council of Child Welfare, and they are working on that one. And let me give them a thumb here because they are doing good on that one. However, mainly for those in Sudan, they work and they support the unification under the support of [...] UNICEF. [...] But it’s still like-- when it comes to alternative care program, when you ask a Sudanese about alternative care program, [in] the back of their head, they always think of children who [are] born out of wedlock. Yeah. Not children on the move.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In this, the children’s charity Hope and Homes for Children, which works to stop the institutionalisation of children reported that:

“The National Policy on the Welfare and Protection of Children Deprived of Parental Care was finally approved and officially launched in June 2011 emphasising:

- children should be with their own or extended families and if this is not possible then arrangements should be made under the alternative family care system.
- institutions are harmful for children.”

(Source: Better Care Network, Hope and Homes for Children – [Looking Back, Looking Forward: Celebrating 10 years of transforming Sudan’s Child Protection System An innovative model of alternatives to institutional care in Khartoum](#), pg. 15, last accessed 23 May 2024)²⁴

²⁴ Please note that we were unable to trace the exact publication date of the referenced report. However, the webpage indicates that discussions with representatives of public bodies, including the Police Family and Child Protection Unit (FCPU) and UNICEF staff, took place during March and July 2014. Based on this information, we assume that the report was published in 2014.

3.4.2 Application/implementation

Are child protection/social services available, by whom (state/non-state) and what assistance do they provide? And are they accessible in all regions of Sudan? Is the child protection system in practice adequate in terms of quality, capacity and monitoring, in accordance with the international norms and standards on child protection and alternative care for children?

Do all groups of children and their families have equal access to social services/child protection services? Are family homes, shelters or other forms of alternative care available in all regions of Sudan and accessible for all children in need? Please specify which form of alternative care. Is a periodic review done and by whom? Is a support system in place for families who are excluded?²⁵

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“The system itself exists, but it’s not operating. I’ve been working in this alternative care program for more than five years. And the system is very fragile. Mainly when it comes to who goes to the alternative care programs, they are children who are born out of wedlock. They called them here in Sudan, children of sin. So they are socially stigmatised. So those children, they usually go to the orphanage, government orphanage. They call them Mygoma. And then some families came to adopt some of the children mainly because it’s Sudanese culture, but influenced by Islamic culture, mainly they adopt female[s]. And that’s why when it comes to orphanage[s] you will find a bigger number of males or boys to be adopted. Those [are] often being adopted by the Alternative Care Program supported by different organisations, like for example, SOS Children’s Villages. They are pioneering that in Sudan. They also [have a] national program called the Alternate Family Programs, [in] which they support families with this financial stipend to allow [them] to allow [the adoption of] some children for a short period of time. It’s between three months or up to one year to three years. However, [...] they call it the ‘Emergency Families’.

So for instance, one family, no matter if I want to adopt the child, they will not give them [...] directly from the government or they go through—they adopt from the emergency families. But unfortunately, the emergency families become a permanent family or a senior permanent family because [inaudible] the economic situation in Sudan will start deteriorating and families cannot adopt a child. And you see those dynamics. So the number of adoption[s] decreased significantly over the last period. And that’s why those major families become [...] semi-permanent. And it becomes quite difficult to increase the number of emergency families. Like now, children in the orphanage, there [are] no alternative families to adopt them. And definitely, war came and everything collapsed, like the adoption system totally paralysed now. I would like to recall something from the previous question. I remember through this adoption. One of the issues is that responding to children [is] most of the response now or 99 or 97 of the percent of the response. They are for families who arrive at what we call them ‘gathering sites’. And often or usually, those gathering sites would be schools because they’re only safe on big sites that accommodate like a big number of families, not a huge, big number of families. However, there are a significant number of families. It could be two or three times those who are in [the] gathering site, they are living with their relatives within the towns. Those are not safe at all. And it’s one of the issues, that the government system cannot trace families who are living with their groups or with their relatives in neighbourhoods or living within the host community. And those being denied any kind of support. This is one of the critical issues that most of us are facing, and we don’t know how to proceed or how to figure it out.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared that:

²⁵ The questions in this section have been combined into one place because they are directly related to each other. We have consolidated them to avoid unnecessary repetition of information throughout the report.

“So the country is at war and all governance institutions have been shattered and are currently non-functioning or barely functioning. [...] Other things that can impact children is the very fact that basic services, in general, are not functioning, things related to protection services in particular. I mean, yeah, just from the government side, not existing, and everything is basically transferred to NGOs and UN agencies that have very little access to people and very little resources to support. So child protection services and things like that are [...] not even minimal. It’s below [the minimum]. I would also highlight that more than half of the country is now controlled or being contested by the opposition of the Rapid Support Force, which also has no experience in governance. So while there is some attempt from the Rapid Support Force to establish some type of governance, it’s been basically our understanding from Darfur, for example, [...]that nothing is functioning.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

UNHCR in its Protection briefing covering September 2023, reported that:

“[...] Child protection response is limited in the hotspots of Kordofan, Darfur and in Khartoum due to the security situation. Elsewhere, identification of at-risk children is ongoing through protection desks, door to door support and case management. Capacity building of partners and local actors, volunteers and community structures has been done to further strengthen identification, risk mitigation and response. Similarly, community sensitization is ongoing on trafficking and other major issues affecting children.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan | Protection Brief - September 2023](#), 10 October 2023, pg. 12)

OCHA noted in its September 2023 situation report that UNICEF and its partners provide child protection services in Sudan:

“Protection Assistance: UNICEF and partners reached over 71,300 people with psychosocial support services (PSS), including over 64,400 children (33,100 girls) and 6,700 adolescents and caregivers (4,200 females). Around 3,300 children (more than 2,000 girls) and over 23,700 caregivers gained access to interventions to mitigate, prevent, or respond to gender-based violence (GBV) risks. Additionally, around 1,100 individuals, including 464 children (233 girls) and 630 adults or caregivers (391 females), were provided with a safe and accessible channel to report exploitation and abuse by aid workers. The ongoing conflict continues to significantly hinder the delivery of much-needed humanitarian services, including protection assistance, to children and their caregivers.”

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Humanitarian Update](#), 22 September 2023, pg. 6)

In May 2023, the Guardian reported a tragic situation in an orphanage in Khartoum:

trapped in harrowing conditions in an orphanage in Sudan’s capital as fighting raged outside.

Most died from lack of food and from fever. Twenty-six died in two days over the weekend.

The extent of the children’s suffering emerged from interviews with more than a dozen doctors, volunteers, health officials and workers at the al-Mayqoma orphanage in Khartoum. The Associated Press also reviewed dozens of documents, images and videos showing the deteriorating conditions at the facility.

Video taken by orphanage workers shows bodies of children tightly bundled in white sheets awaiting burial. In other footage, two dozen toddlers wearing only nappies sit on the floor of a room, many of them wailing, as a woman carries two metal jugs of water. Another woman sits on the floor with her back to the camera, rocking back and forth and apparently cradling a child.

An orphanage worker later explained that the toddlers were moved to the large room after nearby shelling blanketed another part of the facility with heavy dust last week.”

(Source: The Guardian – [At least 60 children die trapped in Khartoum orphanage amid Sudan conflict](#), 31 May 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Child Act 2010, Article 5 (2) states that:

“Without affecting the generality of the provisions of subsection (1), the following general principles shall be the fundamental rules for application of the provisions of this Act :-

- (a) the State shall be assigned with care and protection of Children, and strive to prepare the appropriate circumstances for the proper upbringing thereof, from all sides, in the framework of freedom, human dignity and spiritual and social values, and in a healthy environment;
- (b) the sound upbringing of Children is a public responsibility; and the State shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and the family, by virtue of the religion and local custom”

The Child Act 2010, further notes that:

“Care measures for a vagrant Child

24. The competent bodies, in case of finding a vagrant Child, shall hand him over to whoever satisfies the moral guarantees for his care, in accordance with the following arrangement:-

- (a) his parents, or one of them;
- (b) whoever has guardianship, or trusteeship thereon;
- (c) one of his family members, or relatives;
- (d) a Maintenance Family, to be entrusted with his care according to the provisions of Islamic Sharia and the non-Muslim status law as the case may be;
- (e) an official body competent to care for Children.

Substitute care

25.(1) Substitute care shall be presented to Children, who suffer from difficult family circumstances, which hinder their upbringing, or restitution to their natural families, in accordance with the following arrangement :-

- (a) relatives of the mother, or father;
- (b) Maintenance Families, in accordance with ordinances of Islamic Sharia, and adoption in accordance with the Non-Muslims Personal Status Act; provided that the regulations shall specify the safeguards and conditions organizing Maintenance Families, and the categories benefiting thereby;
- (c) Care Homes.
- (2) The social care institutions such as the Zakat Fund, and other of funds shall subsidize the Substitute Care Institutions and programmes.
- (3) Upon selecting Substitute Care, due consideration shall be had to continuity of Child instruction, in accordance with his religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background, according to his beliefs.

Care Homes established

26. The Ministry shall establish Care Homes for the Children, who are deprived of family care; and the regulations made under the provisions of this Act shall specify the tasks, functions and manner of organizing the same.

Instruction Homes

27. There shall be established Instruction Homes for delinquent Children, and the regulations shall specify the tasks, functions and manner of organizing them.

Functions of the Family and Child Protection Unit

55.(1) The Family and Child Protection Unit shall have competence to:-

- (a) conduct inquiries in the contraventions attributed to Children, in accordance with the provisions of this Act, or any other law;
- (b) conduct inquiries in the contraventions and offences committed against children.
- (c) take such measures, as may ensure guarding and protection of Children, against all forms of violation, and conduct inquiries, and submit the same to the Children Prosecution Attorneys Bureau;

(d) search for missing and kidnapped Children and escapees from their families, or instructional and charitable institutions, or any other institutions concerned with Children affairs, upon the information issued by such bodies;

(e) conduct the necessary co-ordination, with the bodies having competence, to present the social and psychological treatment, to victim and aggrieved Children, upon what the inquiries and reasons for decision in the trial have reached;

(f) conduct researches and statistics, by seeking the help of those specialized, on cases of delinquency and violations, in respect of Children, and submit the same to the bodies of competence, together with the appropriate recommendation with respect thereto.

Remand Homes

59.(1) The Ministry of interior shall establish Remand Homes, in accordance with the international standards to the children who are waiting inquiry or trial.

(2) Children, during the period of their remaining at Remand Homes, shall receive care and protection, and all types of legal, social, educational, vocational, psychological and medical aids, which are requisite therefor, subject to their gender, character and special circumstances.”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), entry into force 10 February 2010, Articles 5(2)(a,b) and 24-27, 55, 59, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there any regional and rural/urban differences? How many social workers are there?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided the following context:

“[...] I worked in South Kordofan and I worked in Khartoum in alternative care program. [...]. When it comes to South Kordofan, there is no need for alternative care program to support certain children. There is a need for alternative program, but there is no need for orphanages. Our social centres because most of the children [are] being adopted within the families. So the community-based structures can absorb and accept children, okay, within the families. And that’s why you will find some families who might host children. Even if it’s not their relatives, it’s from the same ethnicity. They adopt him for half for a while until being unified. So it could be easier for rural [cities] to adopt some children. However, in Khartoum, this is not the case in an urban setting. Even for an instance, the acceptance of-- I’m sorry for coming back for those children, of course. Although we’re talking about war but when it comes to children born out of wedlock, in some areas of Sudan, particularly in Kordofan and Darfur, they called them the son or the daughter of--In Arabic, [...], they call it Wad Arrida (وادي). That means a child who [is] accepted by the community, being accepted by the family because the mother and the father of that child was willing to have that child, somehow. However, in Khartoum, or in other parts of the country that more to the northern part, like River Nile [...], they call them the child of the sin[...]. And that’s why they won’t accept it. So it differ[s] how [the] community look[s] at the child and the acceptance for the child. Yeah. So the social stigma associated with a child. [...] In terms of the [numbers of] social workers[...] there is no statistic of the number of the social workers. At the state level, I cannot come up with the right figure. However, based on the structure of the-- and getting me back to the structure, usually, we have the federal government, [State Council for Child Welfare] (SCCW)²⁶, then we have the state, state level, [National Council for Child Welfare] (NCCW) at the state level, then we have administrative units. So in each administrative unit, there is all locality level then administrative unit. And in each locality and administrative unit, there are a number of between 5 to 10 social workers who can reach but the issue is not about how many numbers only but also about different activities that are being used by social workers to reach vulnerable population [...] find a locality or administration unit that they don’t even have a vehicle to go and work with a certain

²⁶ The NCCW and SCCWs are part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, and at state-level fall under the responsibility of the Wali (Governor).

child or whether they don't have the budget to facilitate the transportation and the need, particularly for those away from the centre. The day-to-day issues that have been faced by social workers but there is a structure of the social workers at state level and at the current level and administrative unit level. And I don't know if you need that figure. It's quite challenging to get it, to be honest but it can be collected. We can manage to get that one."

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Are there specific groups of children overrepresented in the child protection system and if so, why? How are social services financed?

Corroborating UNICEF's information below on children born out of wedlock, Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

"[W]hen it comes to who goes to the alternative care programs, they are children who are born out of wedlock. They called them here in Sudan, Children of Sin. So they are socially stigmatised. [T]hey usually go to the [...] government orphanage. They call them Mygoma[...] but influenced by Islamic culture, mainly they adopt female[s]. And that's why when it comes to orphanage[s] you will find a bigger number of males or boys to be adopted.[...]

Social service[s] [are] financed mainly by the Ministry of Finance. They have this annual budgeting. So it's been done there. [...] The last financial report was in 2020, and the percentage is less than 2% for [...] social development. In general, when you say social development, you're talking about poverty reduction, youth support through the Ministry of Social Development. We [also have] what is called the Graduation Employment Program. [...]. However, the organisations also give [...] general support for the ministries. And [...], they mainly rely on the support of the international organisation. Okay, there's one thing. In 2021, the transition government, [...] 2021, issued-- launched a program called Samarat. [...] for me, it was a good program supporting different families in the country through the Ministry of Social Development. However, this program couldn't continue because [of] the coup that happened in October 2021. And then the donors stopped the funding or stopped the support for the program. And unfortunately, since that time, the program [has] been suspended. It tried to be supported by-- be relaunched through international NGOs, but I think the donors were reluctant to support. And now the program does not exist anymore."

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Whilst, Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared that:

"I don't know of any social services. Not at present. I don't even know if the Humanitarian Aid Commission, which was the umbrella body within the government, whether it exists or functions. I'd be interested to see the last time HAC, as it's called, has said anything. I think we're at a point where we need to accept that children are more vulnerable than they could be at just about any other place in the world."

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In its annual report covering 2020, UNICEF noted challenges related to the abandonment of children born out of wedlock, and highlights that the Maygoma Orphanage in Khartoum accommodates 350 children:

"Abandonment of children born out of wedlock continues as a big challenge due to the stigma associated with unmarried mothers, and only the Maygoma Orphanage in Khartoum accommodates more than 350 children. Poverty and the economic situation are one of the main challenges hindering adoption (as per the kafala system, Islamic adoption). In spite of these challenges, UNICEF continues its advocacy and campaigns to move children from institutions to alternative family care. These interventions resulted in the formal foster care system being strengthened. This enables the provision of a protective environment and improved family-based living conditions for over 5,894 children without parental care."

(Source: UNICEF – [Child protection, Annual Report 2020](#), March 2019, pg. 8, last accessed 23 May 2024)

This research report, published by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-G) explains that:

“The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning is responsible for directing the funds for the MoLSD’s social protection programmes (including cash transfers), subsidies and social development expenditures.”

(Source: IPC-G, Bilo, C., A. C. Machado, and F. Bacil – [Social Protection in Sudan: System overview and programme mapping](#). Research Report No. 53. Brasília and Khartoum: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, Sudan’s Ministry of Labour and Social Development and United Nations Children’s Fund, 5 November 2020, pg. 15, last accessed 23 May 2024)²⁷

Are there children’s hotlines or other services so that they can report any abuses? Is the hotline operated by an independent entity or a service provided by the State? Is staff working in the family homes/shelters/other forms of alternative care qualified (received appropriate education/training)?

In a series of written responses to questions sent by Asylos for this report, Asma Taha a Humanitarian Practitioner/Expert indicated in June 2024 that:

“There are two hotlines for social services that I am aware with, the one for reporting abuses led by the Family and Child Police Unit (FCPU) which was in cases reported that the service was not provided all the time, the other was led by the Combat Violence against Women (CVAW) mainly dealing with GBV and SGBV, both are government entities. However, I am not sure if both hotlines are functional post conflict.”

(Source: Asma Taha, [written communication with Asylos](#), 2 June 2024)

Corroborating Asma Taha’s input from above, Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“There [were] two hotlines, one for the [...] Child and Family Unit, which [is] a kind of police program or-- they don’t call it-- we cannot call it police, but the responsible for that one is the Ministry of Interior Affairs.”

When asked to clarify if the above services are active he explained that:

“Yeah, by the state, and it worked very well. One of the good programs in the country. However, this one stopped [once] the war [started]. There are no [...] hotlines working. And there is also another hotline. Also was a part of the National Council of Child Welfare, but it’s not been reactivated again since the war. Yeah [...]I think [due to] lack of resources. They were also waiting for some support from UNICEF to support that program. Yeah. They are not working definitely but for the National Council of Child Welfare, it’s even earlier than this since it’s been stopped.” When asked if he knows of the reason why the service stopped, Ahmed replied:

I think [they stopped because of] lack of resources. They were also waiting for some support from UNICEF to support that program.[...]”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Although this report by Hope and Homes for Children, explains that social workers are provided training with the support of UNICEF, it’s important to note that this information is outdated and the mentioned ongoing training is likely no longer taking place, and that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering ongoing conflict, displacement of millions of people and governmental collapse in Sudan:

“[...]On-going training continues to be provided for social workers with the support of UNICEF and HHC Sudan. Social workers have weekly case work meetings to share and learn from each other.”

(Source: Better Care Network – [Looking Back, Looking Forward: Celebrating 10 years of transforming Sudan’s Child Protection System An innovative model of alternatives to institutional care in Khartoum](#), pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024)²⁷

²⁷ Please note that we were unable to trace the exact publication date of the referenced report. However, a current employee at Hope and Homes for Children has confirmed the report was published in 2014.

How are family homes, shelters and other forms of alternative care financed (private, public)? Is the way alternative care is financed in any way limiting access for all children?

No information could be found on whether the financing of alternative care limits access for all children in Sudan, it is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering the ongoing conflict and displacement of millions of people.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 stated that explained that:

“Mainly, it depends on the public. But also, there is a significant part of support from the private sector. For example, we have the orphanages, government orphanages. We called it Mygoma. So it’s well known the support [is] mainly through [the] Ministry of Finance to them in terms of service, in terms of the operation cost. However, when it comes to-- when it comes to the number of [...]children because it increases day by day, [...]they usually have the support from the individuals who come to orphanages and give in-kind support and sometimes financial support. [...]

It’s important to highlight here when it comes to the health [of] orphanages because most [...] organisations, they don’t support the orphanages based on the alternative international or UN and alternative care guidelines. And that’s why they face some challenges. And they usually go to the individual support. However, during the emergency, those orphanages [are] being supported by for example, when it came to the evacuation, they relied on ICRC and MSF to evacuate children from other safe areas. And again, from Madani to Kassala and other safe areas through the support of international organisations, which is supporting survival of the children. But this is the issue where they cannot support the program for quite a long time due to its way of care or settings, which is not in line with [and] is not preferred by international NGOs.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In this report “Looking Back, Looking Forward: Celebrating 10 Years of Transforming Sudan’s Child Protection System”, Hope and Homes for Children, explained that:

[...]A Permanent Alternative Family is financially responsible for the child and takes responsibility for most of the day to day decisions affecting them. The State retains the responsibility to monitor the placement and intervene if it breaks down.[...]”

(Source: Better Care Network – [Looking Back, Looking Forward: Celebrating 10 years of transforming Sudan’s Child Protection System An innovative model of alternatives to institutional care in Khartoum](#), pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024²⁸)

Are children placed in institutions only when necessary and suitable, following appropriate procedures?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared:

“As I mentioned earlier, the application of necessity is quite difficult here. But who necessitates a program? There are children whose mothers and fathers or their families cannot be traced. And usually, those children, for example, we find them on the streets, but in some areas, we collect them and bring them to the alternative care program or the orphanage. However, as I mentioned earlier, most of those children are children who are born out of wedlock, or, in [some] areas, we call them being children of sin, based on the committee[’s] perception [of] them. And that’s why many mothers, when they deliver, they just try to hide that one with the child in the street. Then someone takes that child, open[s] a Police case at [the] Child family unit, then the child will be placed in an orphanage, government

²⁸ Please note that we were unable to trace the exact publication date of the referenced report. However, a current employee at Hope and Homes for Children has confirmed the report was published in 2014.

orphanage or institutional care centre. This is the usual practice. There are some families or some mothers who bring the children themselves to the orphanage centres. And in that one, there is a police staying, sitting in that centre. They open a Police case. Usually, the social workers will try to do their best, discussing with them not to put their children within the orphanages. But this is, to be honest with you, it's based on [the] individual skills of the social workers. It's not like-- they do their best to do so. But often, mothers will refuse to hold the child or care of the child because of social stigma. And then they will leave them at the orphanage centres. In that one, I guess I would like to give you some information to understand it as well. The case would be open against the mother because it's against the Sudanese law, adultery. Okay, the child of adultery as a government law. So if the mother wants to care for the child, then they have to pass the criminal law so that the child would have papers with their names. Otherwise, the case would be open. It would be in the centre. When a family wants to adopt a child, they can go. And the day that they adopt the child, the Police case will be closed. So you see. So yeah, it's not complicated. It's clear. However, there is [an] engagement of a Police case with the general family unit that's supposed to be done to enable [a] child in the future to have papers and names and yeah."

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Is there an explicit prohibition of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure in alternative care institutions?

In its update submission 'Corporal punishment of children in Sudan: Briefing for the Universal Periodic Review, 39th session', 2021 From the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, March 2021. End Corporal Punishment reported that:

"2. 3 Alternative Care Settings (lawful): There is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment: it is lawful as for parents (see under "Home")."

(Source: OHCHR – [Corporal punishment of children in Sudan](#), November 2018, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is a functioning foster care system in place in all regions of Sudan and is a periodic review done of the system and the families/communities involved?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024:

"[...]There is also a national program called the Alternate Family Programs, which [...] supports families with this financial stipend to allow [them] to adopt some children for a short period of time. It's between one year or three months to up to one year to three years. However, [...] they call it the 'emergency families'."

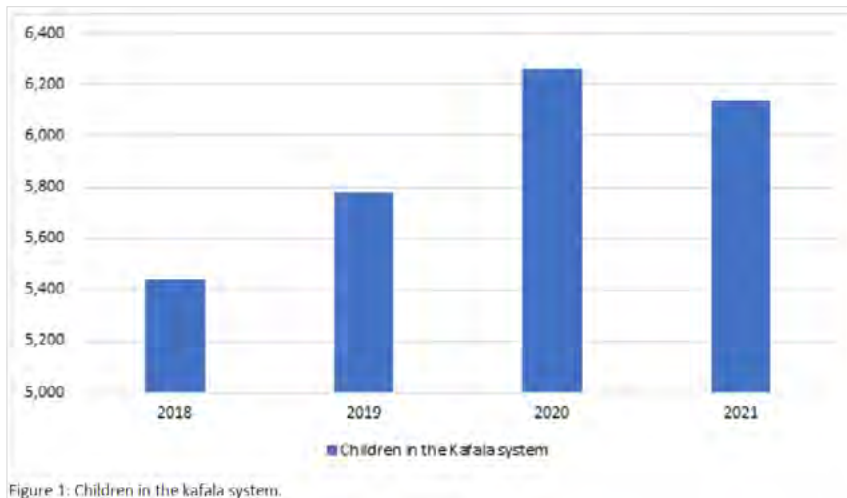
(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

The UNICEF 2022 State Profile on the state of South Darfur indicated that:

"975 unaccompanied and separated children (167 girls and 808 boys) were identified and reunified with their families or placed in alternative family care."

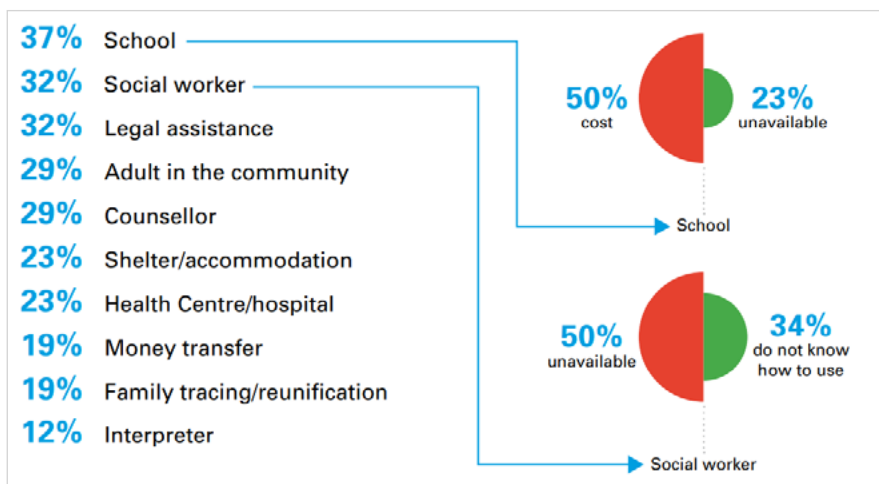
(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – South Darfur](#), 9 May 2022, pg. 6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UNICEF 2021 Child Protection Report showed a chart of their review on the progress from 2018-2021 on the number of children in the Kafala System (foster care/alternative care):



(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection 2021](#), 03 April 2022, pg. 13, last accessed 23 May 2024)

An infographic created by UNICEF stated that the percentage who wanted to use each service, but were unable to were:



(Source: UNICEF Office of Research- Innocenti – [Brief 2 Access to Basic Services](#), February 2022, pg. 3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Although this report by Hope and Homes for Children, explains the procedures for selecting and training Emergency Alternative Families and Permanent Alternative Families, as well as the safeguarding measures for children placed in these families, it's important to note that this information is outdated and the mentioned safeguards are likely no longer in place, and that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering ongoing conflict, displacement of millions of people and governmental collapse in Sudan:

“Selection and training

When a family makes enquiries to become an Emergency Alternative Family or a Permanent Alternative Family, a rigorous process is in place to select applicants. The child's best interests are at the forefront of this process and several meetings/visits take place with the Emergency Alternative Family or the Permanent Alternative Family before any child is placed. Families also undergo training during which they will learn best practice in caring for children as well as the trauma the baby may have experienced and its possible impact of this.

Safeguarding

Once a child is placed in an Emergency Alternative Family or a Permanent Alternative Family, safeguarding the child's welfare is of primary concern. Regular visits take place, often unannounced, to verify that the child is being cared for appropriately and to assess the family for further support if needed. In the case of Emergency Alternative Families, visits will be weekly. Visits to Permanent Alternative Families will begin at this pace but reduce to every three months, every six months and then every 12 months until the child reached the age of 18. [...]"

(Source: Better Care Network – [Looking Back, Looking Forward: Celebrating 10 years of transforming Sudan's Child Protection System An innovative model of alternatives to institutional care in Khartoum](#), pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024)²⁹

Is family tracing available for orphans/separated children and through what means?

Up to date information on the availability of family tracing for orphans and separated children is limited. Below is the most current information available. It is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering the ongoing conflict and displacement of millions of people.

In an infographic distributed by OCHA in 2023, it was stated that:

"In response to the current crisis, the CP AoR has established a dedicated Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) to allow for the tracking, registration and reunification of unaccompanied children."

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Humanitarian Response Dashboard](#), 15 August 2023, pg. 10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the UNICEF 2021 Child Protection Report it was stated that in Sudan:

"A total of 3,706 unaccompanied and separated children benefited from family tracing and reunification with their family and community."

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection 2021](#), 03 April 2022, pg. 4, last accessed 23 May 2024)

3.5. Statistics on children in different systems

How many children are in the child protection system (officially, unofficially)? Are statistics available on the number of orphans (children who lost one or both parents) and are cared for in the alternative care system?

On its website, UNICEF reports that 3.5 percent of children in Sudan live without their parents:

"[...]Many children in Sudan are not living with their families, mainly due to armed conflict, displacement and poverty. Only 82 per cent of children below eighteen years of age are living in a family environment, while 3.5 per cent live without their parents, including children living on the streets, or those engaged in child labour such as gold mining, or residing in institutions (UNICEF, 2019)."

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection](#), last accessed 22 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UNICEF Sudan Country Office 2023 Humanitarian Situation Report stated that:

"Over 800 unaccompanied and separated children have been given alternative care or reunified with their families and community members since January 2023, including around 600 children since the start of the conflict."

²⁹ Please note that we were unable to trace the exact publication date of the referenced report. However, a current employee at Hope and Homes for Children has confirmed the report was published in 2014.

So far, 27 children (17 girls and 10 boys – aged between 7 months and 3 years) have been placed with foster families. An additional 10 children are in the process of being placed with foster families and 13 foster families in the Red Sea have been assessed and are ready to take care of children in the coming days.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8, 15 July 2023](#), pg. 5, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UNICEF 2021 Child Protection Annual Report stated that:

“6,141 children are living in alternative family care across Sudan.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection 2021](#), 03 April 2022, pg. 13, last accessed: 12 November 2023)

4. Rights and freedoms of children

4.1. Nationality and citizenship rights

Is the right of a child to a nationality (CRC Art 7) respected in full?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 stated that:

“Yes. This has been implemented so far. From my experience, there is no issue on that one. However, it becomes quite difficult because of displacement, many families lost their original papers in the area affected by conflict like Darfur and Khartoum and that’s why some people face challenges. One, in terms of issuing those documents and procedures. There is also an experience of, I wouldn’t say denial, but [...] challenges. Some of those in-- some of those they have political-- are related to certain political parties in the country, also have certain political views, which face some difficulties in issuing their different papers, including birth certificates, passports for their children in terms of sense of revenge, but then later it’s being facilitated. And we have experience of one of the most famous lawyers in Sudan who went to one of the embassies outside of Sudan to renew the papers for his daughter but is being faced with denial from the embassy itself. So there [are] individual cases which can be related to certain groups. They may face some difficulties. But in general, it can be issued. Again, what I would like to state [is] that many people, particularly those who moved early-- I would recall my experience in Khartoum. I was displaced[...] from Khartoum to Al Jazeera to Madani, and many of those who came with me faced challenges to get their papers back or to get their papers or issuing [...] new papers from what we call it the national registration bureau down in the country.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“The Sudanese Constitution promulgated in the Declaration of August 2019 is utterly meaningless, utterly meaningless. If you look at the Rapid Support Forces, which now control at least half the country, I doubt you could find more than a dozen members who understand anything of the interim Constitution or what the phrase inalienable right means, what citizenship means. These are people who in the main come from nomadic pastoralist backgrounds. Hemedti himself moved to South Darfur when he was very young. He grew up. He’s often described as a camel trader. In fact, he was a camel thief. But the idea of citizenship, especially along the Chad/Darfur borders, is meaningless. And most of the RSF comes from Darfur, from Chad, from Niger, from Mali. So these are people-- and if you look at a map, you’ll see that these countries are defined by big straight lines drawn by colonial powers. And Zaghawa, for example, are on both sides of the border in very large numbers. The president of Chad, the son of Idriss Deby – the son is now President Deby – is himself Zaghawa. So much more important than borders are ethnic groups, and citizenship is a meaningless concept for the Rapid Support Forces.

And insofar as the Sudan Armed Forces controls Sudan, it abrogated the Constitution blatantly with the coup of October 2021 and further abrogates all international law with its systematic and continuing atrocity crimes not only to defeat the RSF but with immense collateral damage, including children. The protections of children – we constantly have reports of children being abused, children being raped, children being abducted. The phrase inalienable right to nationality and citizenship is meaningless in a country that is, in fact, a failing state.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

UNHCR highlights the inconsistencies between the 1994 Nationality Act and the Interim Sudanese Constitution regarding the rights of women and men to confer nationality to their children. However, the report does not provide information on the full respect and implementation of these constitutional rights within the specified timeframe:

“In Sudan, the 1994 Nationality Act provides that children born outside the country before the coming into force of the Act whose fathers were born in Sudan are Sudanese. The Act furthermore provides that all children residing in Sudan at the coming into force of the Act whose ancestors from the father’s side were residing in Sudan since 1956 acquire Sudanese nationality by descent. After 1994, the Act grants citizenship to children born to a father who was a Sudanese national by descent. The law was amended in 2005 to allow a child born to a Sudanese mother to acquire Sudanese nationality by birth by following an application process. These provisions from the 1994 Act are at variance with Article 7 of the Interim Sudanese Constitution that guarantees that “every person born to a Sudanese mother or father shall have an inalienable right to enjoy Sudanese nationality and citizenship.” After the creation of the independent State of South Sudan, the Republic of Sudan amended its nationality law in 2011 and subsequently in 2018, but has yet to amend the relevant sections of the 1994 Act to ensure equal rights between Sudanese women and men to confer their nationality to their children. The Interim Sudanese Constitution remains in force until Sudan adopts a permanent constitution.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2022](#), 4 March 2022, pg. 10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The ‘US Department of State, Country Report: Sudan, 2022,’ explains the birth registration process and its implications in Sudan:

“Birth Registration: The constitutional declaration states that persons born to a citizen mother or father have the right to citizenship. Birth registration was provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. Most newborns received birth certificates, but some in remote areas did not. Registered midwives, dispensaries, clinics, and hospitals could issue certificates. Failure to present a valid birth certificate precludes enrollment in school. Access to health care was similarly dependent on possession of a valid birth certificate, but many doctors accepted a patient’s verbal assurance that he or she had one.”

(Source: US DOS – [Country Report: Sudan](#), 2022, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do any children face barriers to accessing either of their parents’ nationality(ies) and/or the nationality of Sudan, e.g. because women cannot transmit nationality to children, parents are stateless, parents are not married, parents are not lawfully resident in Sudan or country of birth, parents are LGBTQI+, child was born in transit, etc)?

In a written response to a couple of questions sent by Asylos for this report, Sudanese journalist, Hassan Ahmed Berkia indicated in April 2024 that:

“In regards to [...]surrogacy, this practice doesn’t take place in Sudan and as far as I know the law doesn’t permit it. I reached out to family lawyers in Sudan but couldn’t get an answer because they are in different parts of the world and connecting has been a challenge. But surrogacy is unacceptable culturally in Sudan, even if legislation permits it the society will not, as we live in an eastern society after all which abides by religion and tradition as you know.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 16 April 2024)

According to the US Department of State 2022 Sudan report on Human Rights, the Sudanese constitution grants a child born to a citizen mother or father the right to citizenship:

“Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses
Children

Birth Registration: The constitutional declaration states that persons born to a citizen mother or father have the right to citizenship.”

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2022 Human Rights Report](#), pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Sudanese constitution states that anyone born to a Sudanese father or mother has the right to access their parents’ nationality.

“45. Citizenship and Nationality

1. Citizenship is the basis of equal rights and obligations for all Sudanese.
2. Anyone born to a Sudanese mother or father has an inalienable right to possess Sudanese nationality and citizenship.”

(Source: Constitute – [Sudan 2019](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

A representative from Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) spoke at the 39th Session of the UNHCR in response to a report by the Independent Expert on the human rights situation Sudan:

“One area of key concern is the issuance of birth certificates: the default religion is set to Islam and Christian families, upon registering the birth of their child, must vigilantly check the religion has been attributed correctly. Many incidents have been recorded where the parents have assumed their religion has been recorded correctly on the birth certificate, only to discover later that this is not the case. Due to legislation on apostasy, amending incorrect information on the birth certificates presents significant legal challenges which are insurmountable for the average citizen. Those that manage to amend birth certificates do so at great financial and personal cost.”

(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide – [HRC39 Oral Statement during ID with the Independent Expert on Sudan](#), 27 September 2018, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Sudanese Constitution states that in the case of a child born in Sudan but outside marriage to a Sudanese father, the child is considered a citizen from birth as of right but if the mother only is Sudanese then she can claim citizenship following an administrative process including compulsory birth registration, establishing parentage or registration with consular authorities).

“Table 2: Right to nationality based on descent

CITIZENSHIP LAW IN AFRICA

Country	Born in country				Born abroad				Legal provision	Date gender equality achieved
	In wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national		Out of wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national		In wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national		Out of wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national			
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Somalia !! ~	R	–	R	–	R	–	R	–	L1962Art2	–
South Africa	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	L1995(2010)Art2(1)	1995
South Sudan	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C2011Art45(1) L2011Art8(3)	2011
Sudan !!	R	C	R	C	R	C	R	C	C2005Art7 L1994(2011)Art4	–

[...]

Notes

n/a	not available
!!	legislation conflicts with the constitution and/or other legislation—the constitutional provisions are noted here unless they provide only general principles and the detailed rules are established by legislation
–	no rights
R	child is citizen from birth as of right
†	child has right to repudiate on majority
C	can claim citizenship following an administrative process (including compulsory birth registration, establishing parentage, or registration with consular authorities)

(Source: Open Society Foundations – [Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study](#), 2016, pg. 56, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to a study published by the Open Society Foundation, “Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study” children adopted by Sudanese parents do not have the right to Sudanese nationality:

“Most African countries provide for children adopted from abroad to become nationals, either automatically or upon a non-discretionary registration procedure. [...]. A few, including [...] and Sudan, have specifically amended their laws to exclude adopted children or adoptive parents from the definition of “child” or “parent.”

[...]

“Table 3: Right to nationality for adopted children

Nigeria					x		–
Rwanda	x						L2008Art12
SADR							–
STP	x						L1990Art9
Senegal	x						L1961(2013)Art9
Seychelles	x						L1994(2013)Art 3
S. Leone				x		“parent” excludes adoptive parent	L1973(2006)Art1(1)
Somalia					x		–
South Africa		x				birth must be registered under B&DRA	L1995(2010)Art3
South Sudan					x		–
Sudan				x		1993 Act removed adopted child from the definition of “child”	–

Notes

Auto.	Acquisition of nationality automatic on completion of adoption formalities
Opt.	Child has the right to opt for nationality
Disc	Child can apply for nationality, award is discretionary
Nat.	Naturalisation

(Source: Open Society Foundations – [Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study](#), 2016, pg. 59, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Article 22 of the Sudanese constitution states that any person born to a Sudanese mother or father has the right to citizenship:

“Article 22

Nationality

Everyone born of a Sudanese mother or father has the inalienable right to Sudanese nationality, its duties, and obligations”

(Source: Refworld – [Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan](#), 1 July 1988, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there provisions in law to grant Sudanese nationality to children born in Sudan who would otherwise be stateless? Is this provision automatic, or does it require an application? Are there barriers to being granted nationality under this provision (eg lack of awareness, inaccessible/complicated procedures, inaccessibility of legal advice, unaffordable fees, long delays, requirement of parent having lawful residence or fear punishment if child is registered, etc)?

It appears that Sudanese law contains no safeguards against statelessness. In the 'May 2022 Report on Citizenship Law: Sudan' by the EUI Global Citizenship Observatory, the report focuses on Sudan's compliance with international standards on nationality. It critiques the Nationality Act of 1994, as amended, for its lack of explicit protection under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, particularly regarding the acquisition of Sudanese nationality by children born in Sudan who do not acquire another nationality at birth:

“4. Current issues

4.1 Compliance with international standards on nationality

[...]

The Nationality Act of 1994, as amended, [...] does not explicitly include the protection required by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child that a child born in Sudan shall acquire Sudanese nationality if he or she does not acquire any other nationality at birth.²⁶”

26 Art 6(4) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (adopted on 1 July 1990, entry into force 29 November 1999).

(Source: EUI Global Citizenship Observatory – [Report on Citizenship Law: Sudan](#), May 2022, pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to a study published by the Open Society Foundation, “Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study”, Sudanese law does not grant its nationality to children who are born in Sudan and who are stateless. The law does provide nationality for children born in Sudan to unknown parents:

Table 1: Right to nationality based on birth in the territory

CITIZENSHIP LAW IN AFRICA							
Country	Birth in country	Birth and one parent also born	Birth and resident at majority	Child otherwise stateless	Parents stateless (s) or unknown (u)	Foundlings	Relevant legal provision (most recent amendment in brackets)
Sudan						x	L1994(2011)Arts4&5

(Source: Open Society Foundations – [Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study](#), 2016, pg. 52, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there any legal or practical barriers to children of Sudanese nationals who are born outside Sudan acquiring their parents’ nationality(ies)?

According to this 2016 study “Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study” published by the Open Society Foundations, in the case of a child born outside of Sudan to a Sudanese father and mother, either with parents being married or not, the Sudanese constitution states that if the father is Sudanese then the child is considered a citizen from birth. In the case of the mother only being Sudanese then there are additional procedures wherein she can claim citizenship following an administrative process (including compulsory birth registration, establishing parentage or registration with consular authorities):

Table 2: Right to nationality based on descent

CITIZENSHIP LAW IN AFRICA

Country	Born in country				Born abroad				Legal provision	Date gender equality achieved
	In wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national		Out of wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national		In wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national		Out of wedlock + Father (F) &/or Mother (M) is a national			
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Somalia !! ~	R	–	R	–	R	–	R	–	L1962Art2	–
South Africa	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	L1995(2010)Art2(1)	1995
South Sudan	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C2011Art45(1) L2011Art8(3)	2011
Sudan !!	R	C	R	C	R	C	R	C	C2005Art7 L1994(2011)Art4	–

[...]

Notes
n/a not available
!! legislation conflicts with the constitution and/or other legislation—the constitutional provisions are noted here unless they provide only general principles and the detailed rules are established by legislation
– no rights
R child is citizen from birth as of right
† child has right to repudiate on majority
C can claim citizenship following an administrative process (including compulsory birth registration, establishing parentage, or registration with consular authorities)

(Source: Open Society Foundations – [Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study](#), 2016, pg. 56, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there a birth registration process in place in Sudan as a whole? If so, to what extent is birth registration taking place?

Ramona Padurean, an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“[...]because institutions are virtually paralysed,[...] including those responsible for registering vital events. [...] coupled with the fact that depending on the demographics and on someone’s profile, they may have been more sensitised to the need and importance of gaining a birth certificate as opposed to not[...]. The fact is authorities competent to issue them are not functioning, and in the backdrop of the fact that we are in the war broke out, which has led to massive waves of displacement, some of them even beyond the border of Sudan. This significantly increases the chances of those children[...]becoming stateless. And we have reports of to which extent this is a risk. [...] And I think that it’s quite intuitively easy to understand that more a person will be remote from the territory whose citizenship they should be claiming, right, more difficult is going to be for that to function. [...] Because first of all, formally, the systems that are set up there would [have] to resort to a consulate most of the time. For example, in the cases of children born within Sudan that would reach Egypt or Tunisia because we have collaborations with established channels of communication with INGOs assisting Sudanese asylum seekers and even Sudanese people on the move in Tunisia or Egypt. And one of the barriers, [...] or main or most complex challenges they mentioned was exactly this, that authorities in said countries have no authority or competence to register and provide them with birth certificates, if the birth did not happen on their territory, [...] So then, you would have to resort to a consulate, which most of the times [...] the capacity is going to be extremely limited. Second of all, the cost associated with this. Third, with the actual probationary requirements for that to go down[...]the chances of those children risking

becoming stateless is extremely, extremely serious and prevalent. And of course, [the] more time [that] passes, [the] more difficult it becomes[...] to work on that. So that is something that, in a nutshell, is a risk, both for those born within Sudan that have not left the territory that are IDPs, but also for those and even more so for those that have been displaced [multiple times] and have decided with their caregivers to leave the country. I mean, just a last point on this[...]which, of course, has rippling effects[...] Because if an individual is in this situation, this is something that [...] legally, you pass on[...] So it creates protection implications even for, well, then, potential descendants, and so on.”

(Source: Ramona Padurean, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In March 2023, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo, reported:

“2.2 Birth certificate
[...]It is required by law to register births. The health institution where delivery has occurred must provide a “notice of birth” to the parents and send a copy of the notice to the local authorities within 15 days. If the birth has taken place outside of a health institution,¹⁰ the responsibility to notify the authorities lies with the midwife, the parents or another adult residing in the same house as the mother at the time of birth (Civil Registry Act 2011, art. 20 & 21).”

10 Most deliveries in Sudan occur at home with a midwife or trained birth assistant (TBA) present. The exception is in Khartoum, River Nile and Northern State, where the majority of deliveries occur in a health facility (MICS 2014, pp. 152-155).

(Source: The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo – [Sudan Civil Registration, Identity Documents and Passports](#), March 2023, pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024)

On the 10 August 2011, the Sudanese government at the time, published this Civil Registry Act:

“Tasks and Functions of the Registrar[...]
the Registrar shall have the following functions
[...]
c) Issuance of the birth and death certificates”
[...]
Registration Procedures of Incidents of Birth

20.1 The health institutions and other health facilities where the incident of birth has occurred must send a copy of the birth notice to the Registrar who the incident of birth falls in the area of his jurisdiction within fifteen days from the date of birth.

[...]
20.3 The persons authorized to notify the birth incidence must notify the registrar about any incidents occurring in the area of his jurisdiction within thirty days from the date of the birth incident.”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: The Civil Registry Act for the year 2011](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF’s Data Monitoring the situation of children and women for Sudan, reports:

Birth Registration	
Legal framework for birth registration	The Child Act (2010)
Civil Registry Act (2011, article 20)	
Official authorities in charge of registering births	Civil Registration Authority, Ministry of the Interior
Department of Statistics’ Birth and Death Register, Ministry of Health	

Birth Registration	
Central Bureau of Statistics	
Organizational structure	Decentralized
Is there a legal obligation to register the birth of a child?	Yes
Is an official birth certificate issued as a result of birth registration?	Yes, and issued immediately if requested in the first year because it is free.
Legal informant to register a birth	Health institution, Midwife, Mother or father of the child
Time allowed for registration	Within 15–30 days of birth
Fee for birth registration	No
Can the fee be increased or waived?	N/A
Fee for birth certificate	No
Penalty for late registration	No; Children up to 15 years can be registered at local Civil Registry Offices. Registration of children older than 15 are referred with a letter from the Civil Registry to the Medical Commission Functioning for age estimation.
However, birth certificates requested after the first year of birth involve nominal fees.	
Other official fees involved in the birth registration process	No
Requirements or fees specific to children who are eligible for citizenship but were born outside the country	No
Requirements or fees specific to children whose parents are foreign nationals	No
Requirements for birth registration	Information to register
Information collected	Regarding the child: Name, Sex of child, Time and date of birth,
Regarding the mother of the child: Full name, Occupation, Place of residence	
Regarding the father of the child: Full name, Occupation, Place of residence, Religion	
Regarding the declarant: Full name	
Processing	Manually (on paper), Electronically
Place of registration	Local registration offices, Place of birth;
Health institutions in which the birth occurred and health authorities supporting a birth send a copy of the birth notification form to the registrar.	
A birth certificate is required for:	Identification, Citizenship, Education, Health care, Legal protection (from early marriage, child labour, premature enlistment in armed forces, prosecution as an adult)
Process for establishing vital statistics on births	–
Data (Sources: Information on civil registration systems was compiled over a period from December 2016 to November 2017 using the existing relevant legal frameworks and in consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices. All reasonable precautions have been taken by UNICEF to verify this country profile; updates will be made to reflect changes in policy and implementation and/or new information.	

(Source: UNICEF Data – [Monitoring the situation of children and women – Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to UNICEF Sudan's 2020 Child Protection Report, the birth registration in Sudan was 77% in 2020; an improvement compared to an earlier 2016 report. This report also mentioned that birth registration was lower in Darfur and in poor households compared to Northern states and richer households:

"During 2020, UNICEF Sudan made significant progress in birth registration. The birth registration system review (which indicates an increase in birth registration from 67 per cent in 2015 to 77 per cent in 2020) was finalised."

(Source: UNICEF SUDAN – [Child Protection 2020](#), pg. 16, last accessed 23 May 2024)

This report, "*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan*," presents UNICEF's comprehensive analysis on birth registrations in Sudan, noting that:

"Child Protection

Birth Registration

The births of 67.3 percent of children under five years in Sudan have been registered; [...] Children in Central Darfur State (30.9 percent) were the least to have their births registered than children in other states with Northern states (98.3 percent) registering the highest number of children under five at birth. While only 37.0 percent of the children in the poorest households were registered, nearly all children (97.9 percent) of under five children who belong to richest households were registered. Overall, only 49.8 of the children possess a birth certificate"

(Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan – [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan, Final Report](#), February 2016, pg. 193, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can Sudanese women pass on their legal status to their children? If so, is there a legal process or is it automatic? Are there any set conditions for the mother to confer nationality to her children?

In this research project, "*Report on citizenship law: Sudan*", author Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, an Associate Professor of International Law at the University of Khartoum, explains that the amendment to the Nationality Act in 2005 allowed children of Sudanese mothers to apply for Sudanese nationality. However, unlike the automatic nationality granted to those whose fathers are Sudanese, children of Sudanese mothers must submit an application to acquire their nationality:

"As a result of the introduction of the INC 2005, the 1994 Nationality Act was finally amended to provide a right for the child of a Sudanese mother to acquire nationality, as the constitution had provided since 1998, though complete equality was not achieved. Section 4 was amended to add a new sub-section 3 which provided that:

[a] person born of a Sudanese mother by birth is entitled to the Sudanese nationality by birth whenever he submits an application for it.

Under the law as amended, any person born in Sudan or to a Sudanese mother or father is therefore granted the right to Sudanese nationality, even if one of the parents is not Sudanese.²⁰ This revision in the law marked the first time that women were given the right to pass on their citizenship to their children, regardless of the citizenship of the father.²¹ However, an application is required, rather than automatic attribution, as in the case of those whose fathers are Sudanese."(pp. 6-7)

In section 2.6 of the report, the author continues to highlight the nationality changes following South Sudan's independence:

"[...]After the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the national Legislative Assembly introduced immediate amendments to the 1994 Sudanese Nationality on 9 July 2011. The amendments added a new Section 10(2), which provided that: Sudanese nationality shall automatically lapse if a person acquired, de facto or de jure, the nationality of South Sudan." (pg. 7)

20 United Nations, Committee on the rights of the Child, CRC/C/SDN/3-4, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention [on the Rights of the Child], third and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2007, page 22, Sudan, 27 June 2008 (available at www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.SDN.3-4_en.doc); Sudanese Nationality Act, 2005 Amendments, Part II, Article 4(3).

21 Nationality Act 1994 (amended 2005) § 4(1).

In addition, a new Section 10(3) stated that:

“Without prejudice to Section 15, Sudanese nationality shall be revoked where the Sudanese nationality of his responsible father is revoked in accordance to section 10(2) of this Act.

Section 15 (included within the Act since 1994) provides for limited protection against statelessness, stating that a minor child does not lose nationality if the father’s nationality is revoked, unless the child ‘is or was the national of any country other than Sudan according to the laws of that country’. A new Section 16 added in 2011 also provided that the President could reinstate nationality to any person whose Sudanese nationality was revoked or withdrawn.”

(Source: Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker – [Report on citizenship law: Sudan](#), [Global Governance Programme]; GLOBALCIT; Country Report; 2022/05; [Global Citizenship], published in July 2022 by the European University Institute, pp. 6-7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the report ‘*On Citizenship Law: Sudan*’ by Citizenship Rights Africa, dated 29 June 2022, the evolving landscape of citizenship rights in Sudan is examined, highlighting both progress and ongoing issues:

“Since 1998, the Sudanese constitution has guaranteed equal rights to men and women to transmit citizenship to their children. These citizenship rights were also contained in the 2005 Interim National Constitution and the 2019 Constitutional Document adopted to govern a transitional period following the peaceful revolution in Sudan ending thirty years of dictatorship and authoritarianism and establishing a civilian-led government. On 25 October 2021, the 2019 constitutional framework was partially suspended, after the head of the army instigated a coup, ending the transitional period before it was completed.”

[...] Close analysis of Sudanese citizenship laws shows that Sudanese nationality rules discriminate between men and women in terms of substance, as well as their practical application.”

(Source: Citizenship Rights Africa – [Report on citizenship law : Sudan](#), 29 June 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this undated Citizenship Rights Africa report on Sudan, the evolution of the country’s nationality laws is explored, focusing on constitutional rights versus legal practices, particularly regarding citizenship rights for children of Sudanese mothers and the impact of South Sudan’s secession on nationality:

“The Constitution provides that “Every person born to a Sudanese mother or father shall have an inalienable right to enjoy Sudanese nationality and citizenship”. The law, however, discriminates against women in terms of access to citizenship for children. Although amendments to the law in 2005 gave the in-principle right for a mother to transmit nationality to her child, it provides automatic citizenship for children of Sudanese men, but requires children of Sudanese mothers to go through an application process. Since it was adopted in 1994, the law has allowed for dual nationality.

In 2011, the law was amended again, following the secession of South Sudan, to provide that any person who has acquired South Sudanese nationality, either in fact or in law, will automatically lose their Sudanese nationality. A large number of people with connections to South Sudan, including children with one parent whose Sudanese nationality is not contested and people descended from many generations resident in the north, have been left stateless or at risk of statelessness by this amendment. The government of Sudan has argued that those eligible to vote in the referendum on South Sudanese had thereby acquired South Sudanese nationality. A case before the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2018 found that the provisions of the Nationality Act violated the child’s right to a nationality. In 2018, the Nationality Act was amended again to exempt

a person from automatic revocation “if it is proved that his ancestors domiciled in Sudan in or before the first of January 1924.”

(Source: Citizenship Rights Africa – [Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

What rights to a nationality do the children of stateless parents have?

A 2016 study “*Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study*” published by the Open Society Foundations explains the amendments to the Sudan Nationality Act 1994 made by the National Assembly of the Republic of Sudan on 19 July 2011:

“Separation of part of a territory

The most damaging example so far in the postcolonial history of the continent has been around the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia—itself never colonised. In 1998, former comrades in arms against dictatorship in Ethiopia’s central government, who had together successfully overthrown that regime and then, to the world’s admiration, peacefully managed the process of creating a new state of Eritrea along Ethiopia’s northern border, decided to turn their guns on each other instead. The brutal war that followed between the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies, fought out in an arid mountainous version of World War I trenches, devastated the lives of tens of thousands: not only the soldiers who were killed and injured and their families, but of all those who became instant suspected traitors in the land of their birth. The conflict rendered people born of parents from the “wrong” side of the border of what had been one country open to treatment as foreigners and subject to deportation.³²⁷ The 2011 secession of South Sudan from Sudan may yet have equally serious consequences. The failure of the parties to agree a joint definition and a joint mechanism to adjudicate cases in doubt on the succession of states left many former citizens of the united Sudan for the first time at risk of denial of their rights as continuing citizens of the Republic of Sudan and some at risk of statelessness, excluded from both the successor states.³²⁸ The Transitional Constitution of South Sudan, adopted in 2011 pending the appointment of a commission to draft a final constitution, did not in fact include transitional provisions on nationality, but echoed the wording of the 1998 and 2005 constitutions of Sudan that “[e]very person born to a South Sudanese mother or father shall have an inalienable right to enjoy South Sudanese citizenship and nationality”, thus providing for a gender-neutral descent-based citizenship regime. It explicitly permitted dual nationality.³²⁹ The new South Sudanese Nationality Act, adopted in June 2011 just before the secession of South Sudan, in turn provided for an extremely broad attribution of South Sudanese nationality, regardless of an individual’s current residence. Article 8 stated that an individual would be considered a South Sudanese national if he or she had a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent born in South Sudan; if he or she “belongs to one of the indigenous tribal communities of South Sudan”; or based on long-term residence (dating back to 1956). The law also provided for acquisition of citizenship by naturalisation based on 10 years’ residence (longer than the five years applied in the north since 1994) and other conditions.

On 19 July 2011, the National Assembly of the Republic of Sudan adopted amendments to the Sudan Nationality Act 1994. New section 10(2) explained that:

An individual will automatically lose his Sudanese nationality if he has obtained, de jure or de facto, the nationality of South Sudan.

A minor child of an affected parent would also lose his or her nationality. The law provides no process to allow a person to argue that he or she has not obtained the nationality of South Sudan (or even to renounce any such right in order to remain a citizen of the Republic of Sudan).

The paradox was that the very broad terms of the South Sudanese law, which appeared to attribute nationality automatically to those eligible even if they were born and resident outside the territory of South Sudan, allowed Khartoum to argue that a very large number of people (anyone with one great- grandparent born in South Sudan) were “really” South Sudanese and thus automatically lost their Sudanese nationality.³³⁰ Several hundred thousand

people with South Sudanese ancestry were thus automatically deprived of their Sudanese nationality and placed at risk of statelessness.”

327 Manby, *Struggles for Citizenship in Africa*, pp. 98–105.

328 Bronwen Manby, *The Right to Nationality and the Secession of South Sudan: A Commentary on the Impact of the New Laws*, Open Society Foundations, June 2012, and Bronwen Manby, *International Law and the Right to Nationality in Sudan*, Open Society Foundations, February 2011.

329 Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, Article 45.

330 In similar circumstances, however, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission, set up by the comprehensive peace agreement of December 2000 that ended the war between the two countries, found that individuals became dual national, even though Ethiopian law did not allow dual nationality: see above, the section on international norms on nationality on page 21.

(Source: Open Society Foundations – [Citizenship Law in Africa A Comparative Study](#), 2016, pg. 126, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can a child receive an independent travel and /or identity document? If so, from what age?

This report by The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center, Landinfo, provides detailed insights into the passport issuance process in Sudan. The report explains that for applicants under 18, the procedure requires written consent from the father or a legally appointed guardian:

“4 Passports

[...]

4.1 Issuance

Passports are issued by the General Directorate for Passports and Migration, which sorts under the Interior Ministry. According to the online service portal of the Ministry of Interior (n.d.-b), applicants must meet in person and bring their national ID card or national identity number.¹⁹

[...]

If the applicant is under the age of 18, written consent from the father or a legally appointed guardian is required.” (pg. 19)

19 The online service portal of the General Directorate for Passports and Migration (n.d.) states that the applicant can show a copy of the ID card. According to Order no. 9 of 2020 regarding the Passports and Immigration Act 1994, it is also possible to present the civil registration certificate (shahadat al-qayd al-madani), which contains the national identity number.

This section, drawn from the same report, focuses on the issuance of national ID cards in Sudan.

“3 National ID card

[...]

3.1 Issuance

ID cards are only issued in Sudan, by the General Directorate of Civil Registration. It is issued to Sudanese citizens over the age of 16 who are registered in the civil registry with a national identity number. In special cases, it can be issued to persons under the age of 16 (Civil Registry Act 2011, art. 27).” (pg. 17)

In the same report it focuses on the challenges of civil registration in conflict areas, particularly Darfur:

“2.1 National identity number and civil registration certificate

[...]

2.1.4 Registration in the conflict areas – with particular reference to Darfur (pg.10)

[...]

Nonetheless, most Darfuris living in IDP settlements have not been registered in the new civil registry and lack a national identity number (Darfur Bar Association 2022; source B 2023; source C 2022).” (pg. 11)

(Source: The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo – [Sudan Civil Registration, Identity Documents and Passports](#), March 2023, pp. 10-11-17-19, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Sudanese Civil Registry Act for the year 2011, as referenced on Refworld, specifically from Chapter Five titled ‘Identification Documents’, outlines the legal requirements for obtaining an identity card in Sudan:

“Chapter Five

Identification Documents

Identity Card

27.1 Every Sudanese who reached the age of sixteen must obtain an identity card, from the office of the Civil Registry in which area of jurisdiction he lives, after payment of the prescribed fee. Identity cards may be issued for those who are less than that age, if necessary.”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: The Civil Registry Act for the year](#), 10 August 2011, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can a child request these documents independently or is consent and /or supervision by an adult necessary?

According to its report on Sudan civil registration, identity documents and passports, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo reported that Sudanese children cannot independently request identification documents like passports or national ID cards. Parental consent, typically from the father:

“4 Passports

[...]

4.1 Issuance

[...]

If the applicant is under the age of 18, written consent from the father or a legally appointed guardian is required.”

(Source: The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo – [Sudan Civil Registration, Identity Documents and Passports](#), March 2023, pg.19, last accessed 23 May 2024)

4.2. General principles

4.2.1. Non-discrimination (including children of minorities and indigenous people)

Are rights recognised in law for all children without discrimination?

Both the Sudanese Transitional Constitutional Charter of 2019 (STCC) and the Child Act 2010 provide for the right to education for all without discrimination on any grounds:

“6 Policy reform and adoption

The STCC provides that ‘the state shall protect the right of the child as set forth in international and regional agreements ratified by Sudan’.⁹⁴ [The STCC, art 49].

[...]

Furthermore, article 61 provides for the right to education and places an obligation on the state to guarantee access to education without discrimination on any ground and that general education is compulsory and free of charge to all.”

⁹⁴ The STCC, art 49

(Source: PULP – [The status of the implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A ten-country study](#), 2022, pg. 307, last accessed 23 May 2024)

This UN report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan, published in July 2020, highlights how poverty impacts the law stating the right of children of all ethnicities to receive equal access to education, in disadvantaged regions and conflict-affected areas, poverty impacts their access to education:

“IV. Main human rights challenges

A. Economic, social and cultural rights

19. Long-standing discrimination and inequality continues to plague Sudanese society, negatively impacting the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Disparities in the enjoyment of these rights remain high, with the conflict-affected regions being particularly disadvantaged, as extreme poverty remains widespread and access to [...] education, [...] are limited.”

(Source: Refworld – [Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 20 July 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there any differences between girls and boys in law and policies?

According to this UNESCO monitoring report on Sudan:

“3. Laws, Plans, Policies and Programmes

Sudan has neither notified of succession, nor accepted nor ratified the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, but it ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1986:

“Article 31 of the 2005 Interim National Constitution states that ‘... all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination, as to race, colour, sex, language, religious creed, political opinion, or ethnic origin, to the equal protection of the law.’ Article 44 of the 2005 Constitution states that ‘education is a right for every citizen and the State shall provide access to education without discrimination as to religion, race, ethnicity, gender or disability.’”

(Source: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report – [SUDAN INCLUSION/Education Profiles](#), Last modified 11 September 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this study published by the Pretoria University Law Press in 2022, despite the Sudanese Transitional Constitutional Charter of 2019 (STCC) and the Child Act 2010 providing for the right to education for all without discrimination on any grounds, there is no policy in place that deals specifically with the education of pregnant girls:

“Both the STCC and the Child Act 2010 provide for the right to education for all without discrimination on any grounds. However, there is no policy in place that deals specifically with the education of pregnant girls. Various socio-economic and cultural barriers stand in the way of girls who fall pregnant from continuing their education.

(Source: PULP – [The status of the implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A ten-country study](#), 2022, pg. 301, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports/evidence about state authorities or others discriminating against certain groups of children? If so, what is the situation they face?

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“So it’s more than discrimination. There’s been reports- and only, actually in West Darfur- of specific targeting of civilians, including children.³⁰ So it’s not believed that the children were the one targeted, but that civilians were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, particularly towards the Masalit community. So twice this year and to a very large scale, there was basically mass attacks against civilians along ethnic lines that, actually, the US has determined as ethnic cleansing, but it’s not for us to say whether this is the case, but just to tell you how large-scale that was, in mainly two episodes of violence in mid-June 2023 and early November 2023, where the ethnicity Masalit was targeted by armed Arab groups affiliated with one of the party to the conflict, the Rapid Support Force. This has been documented at length by several human rights organisations and the UN.[...] And this included the killing of children. There were also instances reported of sexual gender-based violence, including on girls, and that was also on the basis of their ethnicity. Same again for West Darfur.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided this broader context:

“We’re talking in some ways primarily about Khartoum and the ways in which people from South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, and other marginalised areas were abused with hateful racial epithets. Women were flogged publicly for selling beer. Sharia in Sudan was extremely strict. It was one of the last countries to preserve all the provisions of the harshest regime of Hudud, the penal provisions of Hudud, including cross amputation, crucifixion for apostasy. But children were abused systemically. Well, let me qualify that. Children were abused very, very frequently on the basis of their place of origin, their linguistic abilities. Many Darfuris speak with an Arabic accent that is not the classic Arabic of Khartoum or Saudi Arabia or Jordan. When I was doing asylum cases, I did a great many in which it was clear that the interpreter was perhaps Lebanese, Jordanian, or Saudi Arabian and did not understand the answer provided by the Darfuri speaking, the person speaking in Arabic, but not an Arabic familiar, so the translator would just put down what he or she thought was being said rather than what is accurate. So that’s a form of discrimination that exists in Sudan but also outside of Sudan.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In its recent report titled “‘The Massalit Will Not Come Home’: Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan,” Human Rights Watch documented that the Rapid Support Forces, an independent military force in armed conflict with the Sudan military, and their allied mainly Arab militias, including the Third-Front Tamazuj, an armed group, targeted the predominantly Massalit neighborhoods of El Geneina in relentless waves of attacks from April to June:

“From late April until early November 2023, the RSF and allied militias conducted a systematic campaign to remove, including by killing, ethnic Massalit residents, such as Ali, from El Geneina, home to an ethnically mixed population of around 540,000 people. Violence began on April 24 and continued in phases over seven weeks, peaking in mid-June, with another surge in November. The massacre that Ali survived was just one in a deluge of atrocities that the RSF and allied militias, predominantly from Darfuri Arab groups, have carried out in El Geneina and West Darfur in general since the outbreak of the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the RSF on April 15, 2023.”

(Source: HRW – [The Massalit Will Not Come Home’: Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan](#), 9 May 2024, last accessed 29 May 2024)

In a press release UN experts expressed alarm about the escalation of violence in Sudan, particularly sexual violence committed in the conflict, primarily by the RSF:

“We are appalled by reports of widespread use of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, as a tool of war to subjugate, terrorise, break and punish women and girls, and as a means of punishing specific communities targeted by the RSF and allied militias,” the experts said. The experts noted that similar gender-based violence has also been used against non-Sudanese migrants, refugees and stateless persons.

³⁰ UN, [Sudan: At least 87 buried in mass grave in Darfur as Rapid Support Forces deny victims decent burials, 13 July 2023](#) and UN, [Sudan: Killings in Ardamata](#), 13 July 2023; and UN, [Sudan: Killings in Ardamata](#), 17 November 2023

In August 2023, the experts raised concerns at reports of multiple serious violations perpetrated in particular by the RSF. This included reports of sexual exploitation, slavery, trafficking, rape, and acts tantamount to enforced disappearances, which in some cases may have been racially, ethnically and politically motivated, including for expressing opposition to the presence of armed groups in an area. Since then, reports of forced prostitution and forced marriage of women and girls have also emerged.

“These serious acts are reportedly no longer concentrated in Khartoum or Darfur, but have spread to other parts of the country, such as Kordofan,”[...].”

(Source: United Nations – [Sudan: UN experts appalled by use of sexual violence as a tool of war](#), 30 November 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

On the 29 August 2023, the Guardian in this news article “Women in Sudan facing a ‘tragedy’ of sexual violence as rape cases rise” reported that:

“[...] Save the Children has warned that children as young as 12 are being raped, with some “targeted specifically for their ethnicity as well as their gender.”

(Source: The Guardian – [Women in Sudan facing a ‘tragedy’ of sexual violence as rape cases rise](#), 29 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The National News³¹ reported:

“Sexual violence against boys and men has risen during the ongoing crisis in Sudan, a UN official told The National on Wednesday.

Exact figures are not available to ensure confidentiality, but incidents have worsened amid the crisis, said Akiko Sakae, co-ordinator of the gender-based violence sub-sector at the UN Population Fund.[...]

“We do receive male and boys survivors in conflict-affected states, although the majority of our services are designed for women,” she said.

Ms Akiko added that there are designated safe spaces for women and girls where they can go to talk about their experience and get assistance, but such spaces are not available to male victims.

“Due to the stigma, we don’t have such spaces for men and even if we did, it’s highly unlikely that they’d come to these spaces,” she said.

Sexual violence against boys and men is not a new phenomenon in Sudan, particularly in Darfur and Kordofan, she said.

Ms Akiko said she received a call from a colleague who told her of a male victim of sexual violence who refused to speak to anybody about his experience, except to “one friend”.

“They also have high suicidal tendencies,” she said, referring to male victims of sexual violence.

³¹ Taken from their website: “The National was founded in 2008, setting a new standard for quality journalism in the Middle East. The National is committed to delivering quality journalism to its international audiences, offering readers six dedicated editions – UAE, US, UK, Gulf, Middle East North Africa and International- giving them a greater choice and accessibility in finding the news that matters most to them. [...] The National is owned by International Media Investments, a privately owned investment company focused on building a portfolio of quality media assets across the globe.”

Female victims of sexual violence are usually hesitant to reach out for assistance at local hospitals, women's shelters or the police, Ms Akiko said.

"Survivors hesitance and fear of being discovered by the perpetrator is extremely high so we have to take care of making sure that survivors will be treated in a safe and confidential manner and the will of survivors will be respected," she said[...]."

(Source: The National News – [Sexual violence against boys and men on the rise in Sudan amid conflict](#), UN says, 17 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

To what extent are children of certain ethical, religious, linguistic or indigenous minorities able to develop themselves (concerning culture, religion and language)? If not, what are the obstacles they face?

According to the ACPF's Child Law Resources on Sudan, the Child Act (2010) grants children of minorities (ethnic, religious or linguistic minority) the right to enjoy their culture, religion and use of their language:

"Chapter II
General Principles
[...]

(f) a Child, who is affiliated to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority shall have the right to enjoy, with the rest individuals of the group, his culture or declaration of his religion and practice of its rites, or use of his language;"

(Source: ACPF – [Home](#), last accessed 6 October 2023)

Article 27 of the Sudanese 1998 Constitution recognised the right of different ethnicities to participate in cultural life and the protection of cultural production for groups of citizens or sectors, but not for individuals:

"3.3.4. The Right to Participate in Cultural Life
[...]

The Interim National Constitution (INC) Bill of Rights sets out these rights in article 47 under the heading "rights of ethnic and cultural communities" as follows:

"Ethnic and cultural communities shall have the right to freely enjoy and develop their particular culture: members of such communities shall have the right to practice their beliefs, use their languages, observe their religions and raise their children within the framework of their respective cultures and customs.

There is a wide gap between international standards and article 47 of the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights does not provide for the individual rights of participation and benefit, as enshrined in the ICESCR. Individual participation is only secured within collective rights to free enjoyment and development of communal cultures, which severely limits the scope of the right."

(Source: Redress – [The Constitutional Protection of Human Rights in Sudan: Challenges and Future Perspectives](#), January 2014, last accessed 23 May 2024)

ILO states that:

"Article 27 Sanctity of cultural communities
There shall be guaranteed for every community or group of citizens the right to preserve their particular culture, language or religion, and rear children freely within the framework of their particularity, and the same shall not by coercion be effaced."

(Source: ILO – [CONSTITUTION OF SUDAN passed by the National Assembly on 28 March 1998](#), pg. 4, last accessed 23 May 2024)

PULP shares that:

“Article 5 of the Child Act 2010 [...] also provides that the child who belongs to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority has the right to enjoy, with the rest of the group, his culture, or profess his religion and practice his rituals or the use of his language.”

(Source: Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) – [The status of the implementation of the African Children’s Charter: A ten-country study](#), 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Sudan’s Constitution of 2005 in Article 8 of the 2005 states:

“8. Language

1. All indigenous languages of the Sudan are national languages and shall be respected, developed and promoted.”

(Source: Constitute Project – [Sudan’s Constitution of 2005](#), pg. 7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to this United Nations press release published on 13th September 2007, Sudan was among 143 states that voted in favour of adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

“The General Assembly today overwhelmingly backed protections for the human rights of indigenous peoples, adopting a landmark declaration that brought to an end nearly 25 years of contentious negotiations over the rights of native people to protect their lands and resources, and to maintain their unique cultures and traditions.

[...] In favour: [...] Sudan,[...]”

(Source: United Nations – [General Assembly Adopts Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples; ‘Major Step Forward’ towards Human Rights for All, Says President](#), 13 September 2007, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children of ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous minorities able to receive (partly) education in their own language? If not, what obstacles do they face?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shares this experience with the education sector in Sudan:

“[...]generally, in terms of my experience, Sudan has an issue of it’s one of the countries that will not allow you to use another curriculum except [the] Sudanese curriculum. And this has become a dilemma for refugees who are coming from other parts of the country, from other countries, neighbouring countries to Sudan, particularly Ethiopia and South Sudan.

For example, because education is my area so when I was with the children in managing that education project in Tigray response in eastern parts of the country, we faced a problem of language and curriculum. So the government did not allow us to use [a] curriculum other than the Sudanese curriculum. And when it comes to the language, [...] Arabic is the main language. English is allowed on an exceptional basis for such a situation. However, no other language can be [used]. And children who came from Tigray, they studied Amharic. They studied Amharic and this was one of the dilemmas. The same with South Sudanese. Also, we face a problem in terms of curriculum.[...]So this is my experience when it comes to and this is why many children drop out because [of] the language.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In this 2018 report, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides an overview of the linguistic diversity in Sudan and its implications for education:

“[...]Sudan is home to a large linguistic diversity, with 134 living languages listed in the country (UNESCO, 2008). Despite this diversity, the official languages are English and Arabic with a strong prevalence of the latter, since it is the lingua franca in the country. The General Education Organization Act (1992) designated Arabic as the official language of instruction, and the Higher Education Act of 1990 also designated Arabic as the language of instruction for tertiary education. At the primary level, while Arabic is the main language of instruction, the use of local languages, if needed, is allowed (IBE-UNESCO, 2012)

In 2008, it was reported that the Government of Sudan approved the development of materials in different languages. UNESCO also suggested developing a language policy, in order to increase the quality and relevance of education (UNESCO, 2008).”

(Source: UNESCO – [Sudan Education Policy Review, paving the road to 2030](#), pg. 65, March 2018, last accessed 27 May 2024)

In its 2014 Country Report on Sudan, UNICEF emphasised the need for more research into these areas to better understand and address the barriers they pose to education:

“The research team identified additional potential barriers to education that should be explored through further research, which include language of instruction, sexual harassment, and punishment and discrimination of minorities.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan Country Report on Out-of-School](#), pg. 64, October 2014, last accessed 27 May 2024)

Do children of ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous minorities have equal access to the health system? If not, why? If not, what obstacles do they face?

In a situation update by the International Organisation for Migration, dated 4 April 2024, it reported that:

“73,840 individuals benefited from emergency health assistance and 2,401 individuals from nutrition support through eight health facilities (Aj Jazirah, Blue Nile, Northern and Sennar states, and Abyei PCA North), mobile outreach to hard-to-reach communities, and two Migrant Resource and Response Centres (MRRCs) located in Gedaref and Kassala.”

(Source: ReliefWeb: International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – [Regional Sudan Response Situation Update](#), 4 April 2024, pg. 3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In a situation update released by the IOM on ReliefWeb, dated 30 August 2023, the state of healthcare facilities in Sudan is described as extremely critical. The update draws attention to the profound impact of conflict on healthcare infrastructure and services, particularly in South Darfur:

“[General on health care facilities]

[...] The health situation continues to be dire, with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) releasing a statement speaking to the catastrophic impact of the conflict on health care facilities and civilians in South Darfur – little to no options for medical care remain in the state with only one functional hospital controlled by armed groups.

Emerging reports from Eastern Sudan also speak to the concerning conditions in gathering sites, with severe food shortages and lack of health services.” [...]

(Source: ReliefWeb: International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – [Regional Sudan Response Situation Update, 29 August 2023](#), 30 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in a situation report on Sudan published on ReliefWeb on 17 August 2023, provides a detailed account of the deteriorating health system in the country. The report also presents a picture of the healthcare infrastructure in Sudan amidst ongoing conflict:

[Deteriorating health system]

[...] “Out of 89 main hospitals in the capital and states, 71 are out of service, with the remainder operating at partial capacity. Some health facilities have been occupied by armed groups, taking life-saving treatment away from millions of children and their families.”

[...] While the conflict has affected health services in states directly impacted by the fighting, states that have not witnessed active conflict are also suffering from the lack of supplies, especially as newly displaced people are arriving from conflict areas. Currently, an estimated 11 million people in Sudan need urgent health assistance, including about 4 million children and pregnant and breastfeeding women who are acutely malnourished, and more than 100,000 children under the age of five with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) with medical complications who need specialized care at stabilization centres. Hospitals, ambulances, supplies, warehouses, health workers and patients have been attacked in Sudan. [...]

(Source: ReliefWeb, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – [Sudan Situation Report, 17 August 2023 \[EN/AR\]](#), 17 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices focusing on Sudan, the U.S. Department of State highlights the impact of birth registration on children’s access to education and healthcare:

“CHILDREN

Birth Registration: Failure to present a valid birth certificate precluded enrollment in school. Access to health care was similarly dependent on possession of a valid birth certificate, but many doctors accepted a patient’s verbal assurance that he or she had one.”

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2023 Human Rights Report](#), 2023, pg. 41, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can children of ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous minorities be heard in any proceedings affecting them? If not, what obstacles do they face?

Ramona Padurean, an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained:

“Well, to be honest, the first point that we should start with is that currently, there’s not many people being heard in court in Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict because there are, of course, systematic reports about the judiciary being virtually well suspended, even administrative bodies that are way less, let’s say, sensitive and contentious, such as civil registry offices and so on, no longer work. So this is why it’s a bit atypical and I would not be able to respond to that question beyond that because currently, I’d say because of that, not to a lesser or more extent than any other claimant seeking access to justice. Then, of course, for refugees, there’s been an added element even before the outbreak of the war in April because language barriers were an issue. So this has been documented systematically because especially those that have no knowledge of Arabic or especially no one to actually help them would face the full extent of the consequences of having the language barrier[...]. Whether they were Ethiopians or even South Sudanese because we do have reports of this having been an issue for a bit.”

(Source: Ramona Padurean, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

The African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported that:

“Resort to Social Media

Due to a lack of access to the justice system, families of missing persons have turned to social media, particularly Facebook, to make public announcements. However, a simple analysis of these posts reveals that the announcements for missing women and girls are not at the same level as those for missing males. Since the outbreak of war, 450 missing persons have been announced, but the announcements for missing women and girls only began in June 2023, with 18 cases published. Additionally, there are cases that were published among the lists issued by human rights groups since the eruption of the April war. In June 2023, media outlets reported that the Sudanese Group for Victims of Enforced Disappearance had officially reported disappearance cases based on lists of missing persons obtained via phone conversations with their families, using phone numbers attached to their names.”

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam](#), January 2024, pg. 4-5, last accessed 24 May 2024)

Are the rights of homosexual or transgender persons guaranteed by law or specifically mentioned in the law? Is homosexuality punishable by law?

The U.S. Department of State, in its 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices focusing on Sudan, highlights the existence of national laws in Sudan that criminalise individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex:

“Executive Summary

“[...]laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, which were enforced;[...]”

(Source: US DOS – [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), 2022, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The International Organisation, Human Dignity Trust provided the following country profile summary on their web page stating that:

“[...]

Same-sex sexual activity is prohibited under the Penal Code 1991, which criminalises acts of ‘sodomy’ and ‘indecent acts’. These provisions carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. In 2020, the Penal Code was amended to remove the possibility of capital and corporal punishment, which had previously applied to same-sex sexual activity. Both men and women are criminalised under this law.

The law was initially inherited from the British during the colonial period, in which the English criminal law was imposed upon Sudan. Sudan retained the provision upon independence and continues to criminalise same-sex sexual activity today.

There is some evidence of the law being enforced in recent years, with LGBT people being occasionally subject to arrest. There have been consistent reports of discrimination and violence being committed against LGBT people in recent years, especially under the al-Bashir regime which was overthrown in 2019. Nevertheless, LGBT people continue to be vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and abuse post-Revolution.”

(Source: Human Dignity Trust – [Types of criminalisation](#), no date provided, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is homosexuality socially accepted? Are there reports/evidence on state authorities or others discriminating against homosexuals? If so, what is the situation they face?

The 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices focusing on Sudan, the US DOS highlights various aspects of criminalization, violence, discrimination, and restrictions faced by the LGBTQI+ community in Sudan:

“Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics” (pg. 42)

“Criminalization: The law criminalized sodomy for men, which was punishable by five years in jail for an initial offense, and it criminalized other same-sex sexual conduct for both men and women as “indecent acts,” punishable by up to one year in prison and fines. The law was enforced. In 2020, the CLTG abolished corporal and capital punishment for sodomy, although NGOs reported flogging was still conducted.

“Violence and Harassment: According to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) community leaders and organizations, intimidation and physical attacks against the community continued. LGBTQI+ members and civil society organizations also reported increased hate speech targeting LGBTQI+ persons.

Discrimination: The law did not prohibit discrimination by state or nonstate actors based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. Anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment was pervasive in society. There were some reports of medical professionals refusing to provide medical services to LGBTQI+ persons following the disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. There were no reports of official action to investigate or punish those complicit in discrimination or abuses of LGBTQI+ persons.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: Legal gender recognition was not available.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices: There were no reports of involuntary or coercive medical or psychological practices targeting LGBTQI+ individuals.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly: LGBTQI+ organizations reported restrictions on their freedom of assembly and increased pressure to suspend or curtail activities due to fear of harassment, intimidation, or abuse. Some LGBTQI+ activists reported they left the country due both to violence associated with the war and because of targeting for violence or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.” (pp. 43-44)

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2023 Human Rights Report](#), 2023, pp. 42-43-44, last accessed 23 May 2024)

4.2.2. Best interests of the child

Is the principle of the best interests of the child reflected in the Constitution or other relevant legislation? If so, how? (in chronological order)

Chapter 2 of the Sudan’s Children’s Act, 2010 states:

“[...]protection of the Child and his best interests shall have the priority in all the decisions, or measures, relating to Childhood, the family or environment, whatever may be the body which issues, or exercises the same;”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2009, pg. 7, 5.(1)(d), last accessed 23 May 2024)

The most recent US DOS country report on human rights practices, covering 2023, summarises child the main forms of child specific abuses and exploitation in Sudan as follows:

“[...] Child Abuse: There were laws criminalizing child abuse, but the government did not enforce them effectively, especially following the outbreak of conflict.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The legal age of marriage was 10 for girls and 15 or puberty for boys. According to UNICEF and the UNFPA, 12 percent of women were married before age 15, and 34 percent were married before age 18. In some cases, men married girls to exploit their labor. (pg. 41)

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Penalties for conviction of sexual exploitation of children varied and included imprisonment, monetary fines, or both. There was no minimum age for consensual sex and no statutory rape law. Pornography, including child pornography, was illegal. Statutes prescribed a fine and period of imprisonment not to exceed 15 years for conviction of child pornography offenses.”(pp. 41-42)

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2023 Human Rights Report](#), 2023, pp. 41-42, last accessed 25 May 2024)

Are the best interests of the child central in the decision-making with regards to the child and how, and is the child in any way involved in the decision-making process? How does this apply in practice?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provides the following context:

“The National Council of Child Welfare established what is called the Child Parliament. It’s one of the ways of helping children to participate in policies related to children in Sudan with the support of international NGOs like the Children Plan International and UNICEF as well, and then the umbrella of USAID support. So they’re also mainly targeting the vulnerable children, for example, we have the children on Alternative Care Program like children who are born out of wedlock. So this kind of thing. But for me, it’s not very effective because it’s not represent a certain group in Sudan, for example, in Darfur. And if they have been even represented, it’s not reflecting the– it doesn’t have the means to help them be unopened and to be an effective participation in different processes. This is one part.

The other part is particularly after war, things became quite difficult to seek for the best interest of the child. Because right now, for example, almost one year now and no access [to] education. And I would like to recall an experience with the Minister of Education when the displaced children from Khartoum arrived [in] Madani and it’s a personal experience at that place. We advocated with the Minister of Education to allow those children not to sit for the examination, [...] the state examination, which allowed them to go for the intermediary schools and/or intermediary schools. Unfortunately, not all the children [...] managed to sit for [the] exam. And even instead of-- for us, the best interest here is to cancel the exam because those children have just been displaced. They have no books. They’ve been for a while not accessing any classrooms. They’ve been traumatised. But still, some of them, they sit for exam, although it was free time for displaced people. However, they sit for exam and it [has] become a requirement. So this is not serving the best interest of the child.

We advocated with the Minister of Education to allow those children not to sit for the examination, [...] the state examination, which allowed them to go for the intermediary schools and/or intermediary schools. Unfortunately, not all the children,[...] managed to sit for [the] exam.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“I don’t know of any decision-making process that has any integrity or meaning. I’ve done a lot of work on Sudan. And I’ve never heard of such a thing as a central decision-making process with regard to children. Children from the peripheral regions are just not going to be served by any government agency. The al-Bashir regime was immensely

hostile. They couldn't really control population migration. But they could make it difficult in various ways. And one of them would be they're going to ignore the welfare of children, which they did relentlessly, consistently."

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

4.2.3. Right to life and development

Is the right to life, survival and development of the child embedded in national legislation? (in chronological order)

Chapter 2 of the Sudan's Children's Act, 2010 states:

"[...]the State shall guarantee all the lawful rights of the Child, in particular his right to prove his affinity and his right to life and growth, the name, nationality, breast-feeding, custody, clothing and accommodation, and his right to education and care of his conditions, in accordance with the provisions of the law;"

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children's Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2009, pg. 7, 5.(1)(e), last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this news article published by the Middle East Monitor on 7 July 2023, reports on the alarming instances of sexual assault and rape perpetrated against girls and young women, as warned by Save the Children:

"Teenage girls are being sexually assaulted and raped by armed combatants in Sudan in alarming numbers, with many survivors aged between 12 and 17 years old, Save the Children warned in a press release today.

The children make up some of the cases of sexual and gender-based violence as a result of the escalating conflict, with incidents of rape, sexual assault and sexual exploitation being reported by women and girls who have fled the conflict in Khartoum and other areas.

While the sexual violence is understood to be rampant, only 88 cases of rape as a result of the conflict have been verified. This includes at least 42 alleged cases in the capital, Khartoum, and 46 in the Darfur region. However, according to the Sudanese Unit for Combating Violence against Women, this figure likely only represents two per cent of total cases – meaning there have been a possible 4,400 cases of sexual violence in 11 weeks alone.

Some survivors are arriving in neighbouring countries pregnant as a result of rape, according to UNHCR. There have also been reports of girls being kidnapped and held for days while being sexually assaulted, and of gang rapes of girls and women.

"Sexual violence continues to be used as a tool to terrorise women and children in Sudan. We know that the official numbers are only the tip of the iceberg. Children as young as 12 are being targeted," Arif Noor, country director for Save the Children in Sudan, said."

(Source: Middle East Monitor – [Sudan: Children as young as 12 raped and assaulted](#), 7 July 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What are the birth and death rates for children?

The World Factbook, produced by the Central Intelligence Agency recorded the following information on birth and death rates in Sudan:

"Birth rate

33.1 births/1,000 population (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: **18**

Death rate

6.1 deaths/1,000 population (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: **148**

[...]

Maternal mortality ratio

270 deaths/100,000 live births (2020 est.)

comparison ranking: **31**

Infant mortality rate

total: 40.6 deaths/1,000 live births (2024 est.)

male: 46 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 34.8 deaths/1,000 live births

comparison ranking: total **28**

(Source: US Government – [The World Factbook, Sudan](#), page last updated 22 May 2024, last accessed 25 May 2024)

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, reported on the humanitarian situation in Sudan on 23 August 2023, reporting:

[Cases of malnutrition in Gedaref State between April and July 2023 and in White Nile State between May and July 2023]

“In Gedaref State, SC reported that at least 132 children died from malnutrition between April and July, 36 per cent of whom were admitted to one state hospital. The hospital has reported a significant increase in cases of malnutrition, especially among children recently displaced from Khartoum and living in squalid camps. In White Nile State, at least 316 children, mostly under the age of five, died from malnutrition or associated illnesses between May and July, and more than 2,400 children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) – the deadliest form of malnutrition – were admitted to nutrition facilities since the beginning of the year.”

Furthermore the report stated:

“[Hunger and mortality]

At least 498 children in Sudan, and likely hundreds more, have died from hunger, including two dozen babies in a state orphanage, as critical services run out of food or close, according to a recent statement by the international NGO Save the Children (SC). Since the start of the conflict in mid-April, SC has been forced to close 57 nutrition facilities, leaving 31,000 children across the country without treatment for malnutrition and related illnesses. In the remaining 108 facilities that are still operational, therapeutic food stocks are running critically low. In May, Sudan’s only factory for manufacturing “Plumpy’Nut”, key to treating malnutrition in children, was burned to the ground. The factory had been producing around 10,000 tons of Plumpy’Nut paste every year, which was used by aid agencies such as SC, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF. Even before the conflict, existing stocks in the country were nearly exhausted and could not be restocked due to funding shortages.”

(Source: ReliefWeb, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – [Sudan: Humanitarian Update, 23 August 2023 \[EN/AR\]](#), 23 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In its situation report, OHCHR reported on malnutrition and mortality rates in Sudan as:

“[Malnutrition and mortality]

[...] Since May [2023], food insecurity has nearly doubled, affecting more than 20.3 million people, and at least 700,000 children are now at risk of acute malnutrition and mortality. The economy is in freefall, and the health

system in crisis. In early August, the Sudanese Ministry of Health announced that 100 out of 130 hospitals in Khartoum were out of service.[...]"

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan: Human rights situation](#), 15 August 2023, last accessed: 23 May 2024)

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Germany) (BAMF): in these briefing notes summary Sudan – July to December 2022 reported that:

[Children suffering malnutrition]

"According to UN data of 23.09.22, 650,000 children are currently suffering from severe malnutrition. UNICEF forecasts that half of these children will die without support and aid. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) currently estimates that 15 million people suffer from hunger every day and the number will rise to 18 million by the end of September. From July to August 2022 alone, 177,350 people are believed to have been displaced due to internal conflicts and are now in need of aid. According to the UN and WFP, the causes of the current situation include the military coup of October 2021, as a result of which international aid funds were frozen, the ongoing political unpredictability and protests, which are weakening state structures and aid delivery capabilities. [...]"

(Source: BAMF – [Briefing notes summary Sudan – July to December 2022, 26 September 2022](#), pg. 8, last accessed: 23 May 2024)

Are deaths of children (including homicides) investigated and reported?

In this news article published by Reuters on 13th July 2023, it is reported that the U.N. human rights office said:

"on Thursday at least 87 people including women and children had been buried in a mass grave in Sudan's West Darfur, saying it had credible information they were killed by the country's Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

RSF officials denied any involvement, saying the paramilitary group was not a party to the conflict in West Darfur." [...]

"According to credible information gathered by the Office, those buried in the mass grave were killed by RSF and their allied militia around 13-21 June..." the U.N. statement said.

Local people were forced to dispose of the bodies including those of women and children in the shallow grave in an open area near the city between June 20-21, it added. Some of the people had died from untreated injuries, it said.[...]

An RSF senior official who declined to be identified said it "completely denies any connection to the events in West Darfur as we are not party to it, and we did not get involved in a conflict as the conflict is a tribal one."

Another RSF source said it was being accused due to political motivations from the Masalit and others. He reiterated that the group was ready to participate in an investigation and to hand over any of its forces found to have broken the law.

It was not possible to determine exactly what portion of the dead were Masalits, a U.N. spokesperson added.[...]"

(Source: Reuters – [At least 87 buried in Sudan mass grave, including women, children, UN says](#), 13 July 2023, last accessed: 24 May 2024)

On the same day, Al Jazeera reported in this news article that relating to the ICC: reports that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has initiated an investigation into recent hostilities in Sudan's Darfur region, which began 15 April 2023:

“The International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched an investigation into a surge of hostilities in Sudan’s Darfur region since mid-April, including reported killings, rapes, arson, displacement and crimes affecting children.” [...]

““The office can confirm that it has commenced investigations in relation to incidents occurring in the context of the present hostilities,” ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan’s office said in a report to the UN Security Council on Thursday.

ICC prosecutors are “closely tracking reports of extrajudicial killings, burning of homes and markets, and looting, in Al Geneina, West Darfur, as well as the killing and displacement of civilians in North Darfur and other locations across Darfur,” the report said.

It is also examining “allegations of sexual and gender-based crimes, including mass rapes and alleged reports of violence against and affecting children”, it said.

In el-Geneina, West Darfur’s capital, witnesses have reported waves of attacks by Arab militias and the RSF against the non-Arab Masalit people, the largest community in the city. Tens of thousands of people have fled the violence to nearby Chad.

While the ICC cannot currently work in Sudan due to the security situation, it intends to do so as soon as possible, the report said. Under a 2005 UN Security Council resolution, its jurisdiction is limited to the Darfur region.

The ICC has four outstanding arrest warrants related to earlier fighting in Darfur from 2003 to 2008, including one against former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of genocide.”

(Source: Al Jazeera, Reuters) – [ICC investigating Darfur violence amid continuing Sudan conflict](#), 13 July 2023, last accessed 24 May 2024)

Is the death penalty imposed on people under 18 years of age and is it carried out? How many cases per year and on what grounds?

In this news article, published by the International Federation for Human Rights (fidh) describes a case where a 20-year-old woman named Amal was sentenced to death by stoning in White Nile State, Sudan, on June 26, 2022:

“[...] On 26 June 2022, the Kosti Criminal Court in White Nile State, Sudan, sentenced Amal, a 20-year-old woman, to death by stoning, after she was found guilty of violating article 146 (2) (adultery) of the Sudanese Penal Code 1991. [...]”

“Article 146 of the Sudanese criminal law is built on Sharia laws. Married women charged with adultery are sentenced to death by stoning, while unmarried women are punished by 100 lashes. During the transitional period, some legal reforms were passed. Though the transitional government banned corporal punishments for many crimes, the Sharia laws related to adultery remained unchanged. [...]”

(Source: International Federation for Human Rights (Fidh) – [Amal, a young woman sentenced to stoning in Sudan](#), 19 October 2022, last accessed 24 May 2024)

Is the rate of teenage pregnancies recorded and reported?

According to current projections published by the World Population Review on Sudan:

“Sudan is growing at a quick rate of 2.42% per year. This rate adds over 1 million people to the population every year.

Sudan's fertility rate is relatively high at 4.43 births per woman. Sudan has a low contraceptive prevalence of just 9%. Even with a high infant mortality rate and one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates, Sudan is still above replacement level fertility, allowing the population to continue to grow.

Because the fertility rate is so high, a very large portion of the population is under 15 years old, putting additional strains on social services, especially education and health."

(Source: World Population Review – [Sudan Population 2024 \(Live\)](#), last accessed 25 May 2024)

Is the rate of teenage suicide recorded and reported?

Although the World Population Review on Sudan's population in 2024 doesn't explicitly mention the recording and reporting of teenage suicide rates. It focuses on demographic information like population size, growth rate, and structure among other general country statistics that include deaths per day:

"Deaths per Day: 865"

(Source: World Population Review – [Sudan Population 2024 \(Live\)](#), last accessed: 24 May 2024)

In this study report (January 2022) carried out by Ahfad University for Women & Norwegian Church Aid, titled Social Norms Related to GBV: Secondary Analysis of the Voices from Sudan Report in Gadaref, Khartoum, South Kordofan and White Nile States with regard to change in GBV practice over in Sudan, the following interviewee responses were recorded:

"War has increased the incidents of rape and suicide, in addition to physical violence as well". (Man, Rashad, South Kordofan).(pg. 44)

[...]According to participants of the girls and boys focus discussion groups, girls have no choice but to marry, "if she is offered marriage she can either accept or commit suicide and die" (Boy, Sharat village, WN). (pg.50)

[...]The blame is laid so heavily on girls that it could drive them to commit suicide, 52 "this happened in a village near ours that they forced the girl to do something so she committed suicide she hung herself, and this is all because of the blame they put on her unfortunately" (Boy, Shalshala village, WN).(pp. 51-52)

The study further reported:

Blaming the Girl and Woman for Violence

In general, in any incident of violence against a girl or a woman, they are often blamed on it, if they report it. The community usually blames and shames the girl first, and since she is the one who holds the key to her family reputation, the family gets shamed, regardless of the form of violence that occurred (Bicchieri et al., 2018). This complicates the situation where reporting becomes a threat to drawing attention to the incidence of violence, damage the family's reputation, exposing them to social sanctions that can have severe implications, which may end in the girl's suicide. Silence is hence encouraged and practiced to protect the family, and in cases of sexual violence and rape, families resort to means that will conceal the incidents by giving their daughters away for marriage, even to the perpetrator himself, if known, as seen in South Kordofan, leading to double "penalty" for the girl herself, rather than for the perpetrator." (pg. 65)

(Source: Reliefweb, ACT Alliance, NCA – [Social Norms Related to GBV: Secondary Analysis of the Voices from Sudan Report in Gadaref, Khartoum, South Kordofan and White Nile States](#), January, 2022, pp. 44-50-51-52-65, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The scientific online publication Our World in Data provides data causes of death including suicide on Sudan. It should be noted that the information available for Sudan is only up until 2019:



(Source: Our World in Data – [Interactive Charts on Homicides](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

The Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network published the following data on death by self-harm and self-harm by other specific means in Sudan for female children falling into each age group (e.g., 10-14 and 15-19)³². The data includes an estimated value (val), an upper estimate (upper), and a lower estimate (lower) for each age group:

Location	Sex	Age	Cause	Year	Val	Upper	Lower
Sudan	Female	10-14 years	Self-harm by other specified means	2019	20.09986	37.63411	9.818022
Sudan	Female	15-19 years	Self-harm by other specified means	2019	84.61655	156.0871	40.97816
Sudan	Female	10-14 years	Self-harm	2019	20.94911	39.87523	10.20887
Sudan	Female	15-19 years	Self-harm	2019	87.81731	160.8373	42.63036

(Source: Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network – [Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 \(GBD 2019\) Results](#). Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do girls have a right and access to terminate an unwanted pregnancy or a pregnancy which puts their life or health at risk?

Fikra for Studies and Development, a Sudanese nonpartisan think-tank, in a report published in March 2024, highlights various issues surrounding the legal protections for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Sudan, focusing on the challenges faced by rape victims in accessing safe and legal abortions under the Sudanese Criminal Act:

“Challenges and Gaps in Legal Protections

Since its issuance in 1991, the Sudanese Criminal Act has been a subject of criticism regarding SGBV crimes. The texts related to these crimes were deemed unfair to victims, and some of these texts even enabled the oppression of women. Consequently, strong campaigns led by women and their advocates resulted in amendments to certain provisions related to honor in 2009, 2015, 2016, and 2020, respectively. However, these amendments were not satisfactory; many have continued to call for further the Penal Code. (pg. 42)

Despite criticisms directed towards the Criminal Act, Section 135 thereof addressed a significant concern for rape victims, especially victims of conflict related sexual violence: unwanted pregnancy. This Section specifically excludes pregnancy resulting from rape from the unclear definition of the crime of abortion. As stated in the 1991 Penal Code, paragraph 1(b) of Section 135 states that causing the intentional miscarriage of a fetus is not considered a

32 To break down data an account is needed for this source.

crime “if the pregnancy resulted from rape, did not exceed ninety days, and the woman desires the abortion.” (pg. 42-43)

Neither the law nor the circulars issued by the Chief Justice of the Attorney General have provided guidelines on how to apply Section 135(1)(B) and at which stage of the legal proceedings it should be implemented. This has led pregnant survivors to lose precious time navigating between the police, prosecution, and court, exposing them to the risk of exceeding the ninety days stipulated by the law. (pg. 43)

After the outbreak of war on April 15th, the Public Prosecutor issued a circular directing prosecutors in safe states to file reports of various crimes alleged to have occurred in areas affected by the war. This enabled many victims of sexual violence to report and access services, since it was noted that several rape cases had resulted in unwanted pregnancy. Lawyers and other service providers managed to provide support for rape victims, after considerable effort and legal and jurisprudential discussions with the prosecution, specifically in the cities of Medani and Atbara, succeeded in obtaining the prosecution abortion permissions for the survivors, which enabled them to terminate the pregnancy in accordance with the law. (pp. 43-44)

There are no accurate statistics on the number of cases in which rape victims were able to exercise their right to abortion granted to them under Section 135 (1) (b), but in Madani alone, the number exceeds ten cases. In this context, it is necessary to highlight the positive role played by the medical staff in Madani. At the same time, the significant work played by medical staff and lawyers to make those cases possible speaks to the small number of cases and great difficulty with which rape survivors have been able to terminate unwanted pregnancies. (pg. 44)

Despite the coordination agreed upon with the prosecution, the teams working to provide services to rape victims still face difficulties in obtaining the prosecution’s permission for abortion. This is due to delays in acquiring the necessary documents, including blood tests results and ultrasound images proving the gestational age, the doctor’s report on the victim’s medical condition, and the guardian’s consent, all of which must be attached to Form 8 and submitted to the prosecution. It is crucial to exert pressure on the Public Prosecutor to issue a circular outlining the procedures that the prosecution must follow when handling sexual violence cases in general, with special emphasis on cases involving pregnancy resulting from rape. This circular should emphasize the need for expeditious procedures and the utmost confidentiality. (pp. 44-45)

Unfortunately, many victims and numerous service providers remain unaware of the existence of Section 135(1)(B). Consequently, this lack of awareness has resulted in the denial of the right to safe abortion for many victims of rape. This may lead to severe and lasting adverse consequences on the lives of both the victim/survivor and the child and may even endanger the victim’s life if she resorts to unauthorized and untrained personnel to terminate the pregnancy, or if she resorts to commit suicide, as one victim of rape from the 2019 dispersal of the sit-in did upon discovering her pregnancy. Therefore, it is imperative to launch an awareness campaign about Section 135(1)(B) to prevent the recurrence of tragedies.” (pg. 45)

(Source: Fikra for Studies and Development – [Unbreakable: Sudanese Women’s Struggle Against Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#), 8 March 2024, pp. 42-43-44-45, 23 May 2024)

In this press release, OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published on 17 August 2023, the office reported:

“[...] While calling on both parties to the conflict to end violations of humanitarian and human rights law, the experts expressed specific concern at consistent reports of widespread violations by the RSF, including reports that women and girls have been subjected to enforced disappearance and acts tantamount thereto, forced to work, and sexually exploited. Reportedly, hundreds of women have been detained by the RSF, held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery.

Sudanese women and girls in urban centers as well as in Darfur have been particularly vulnerable to violence. The lives and safety of migrant and refugee women and girls, primarily from Eritrea and South Sudan, have also been seriously affected,” they said.

It is alleged that men identified as members of the RSF are using rape and sexual violence of women and girls as tools to punish and terrorise communities. Some of the reported rapes appear to be ethnically and racially motivated,” the experts said.

The experts said that the capacity to support and tend to victims of violence has been significantly hampered by the fighting, which has impeded access to the victims, communities and areas affected by the conflict. They noted that it has been challenging for local and international actors to reach affected persons and those seeking or qualifying for international protection, and to provide assistance, including reproductive and sexual health care, and that there is evidence that local women human rights defenders have also been directly targeted.[...]”

(Source: OHCHR – [UN experts alarmed by reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by RSF in Sudan](#), 17 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do children face specific severe risks due to the fact that they are children and do they have to fear for their lives?

BBC reports that five children were among those killed in an air strike, roughly two months after fighting broke out between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF):

“Seventeen people – five children – have been killed in an air strike in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum, officials say. Twenty-five homes were destroyed in Saturday’s strike in the densely populated Yarmouk district. It came a day after a top army general threatened to step up attacks against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.”

(Source: BBC News – [Sudan crisis: Five children among 17 killed in air strikes](#), 17 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

During a press briefing, a spokesperson for the UNHCR expressed concern for the impact of the fighting in Sudan on civilians:

“This week alone, an attack striking a busy livestock market in the capital Khartoum left at least eight civilians dead, among them at least three members of the same family. The air strike on Al-Muwaliyyah market on 7 June was allegedly carried out by the Sudan Armed Forces. In another incident on 7 June, a child was reportedly killed after a shell hit his family home in the Al-Shajraa district, in southern Khartoum.

We received reports of the killings of four other civilians in Khartoum on 5 June, and on 4 June at least three civilians, all members of the same family, including a pregnant woman, were reportedly killed. On the same day, airstrikes near the Sport Complex in southern Khartoum hit a refugee centre, reportedly killing at least 10 refugees. No fewer than 71 children have died at an orphanage in Khartoum since the fighting began due to lack of humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies.

We are also concerned by reports of conflict-related sexual violence. Since the fighting began, our Office has received credible reports of 12 incidents of sexual violence related to the conflict, against at least 37 women- although the number could be higher. In at least three incidents, the victims were young girls. In one case, 18 to 20 women were reportedly raped.”

(Source: OHCHR – [Concerns over the continued devastating impact of the fight in Sudan on civilians](#), 9 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

BBC reports that nearly 300 orphans, many malnourished, were evacuated from the immediate conflict zone in Khartoum. They are among a reported 13 million children estimated to have been affected by the conflict:

“Nearly 300 orphans caught in the crossfire in Sudan’s capital have been rescued in a daring and dangerous evacuation by humanitarian workers.

The evacuations were carried out following the deaths of 67 children at the Mygoma orphanage in Khartoum. They died of starvation, dehydration and infections as fighting prevented staff from reaching the orphanage.

[...] In a risky operation, 297 children - about 200 of them below the age of two years - were taken by road to the relative safety of Wad Madani, in the south of Sudan.

Another 95 children, both from the Mygoma orphanage and other smaller facilities across the capital, were evacuated over the weekend by a group of local activists.

The state-run Mygoma orphanage was home to about 400 children when the war broke out in April.

It became too dangerous for many doctors and carers to reach the orphanage to look after the children.

Power and water cuts made the sweltering temperatures, reaching as high as 43C, unbearable.

Children, especially the youngest ones, started dying.”

(Source: BBC News – [Sudan conflict: Children rescued from orphanage in Khartoum](#), 8 June 2023)

Are there reports available on the level and prevalence of gang violence and its impact on children and adolescents?

On the 29 August 2023, the Guardian in this news article, *“Women in Sudan facing a ‘tragedy’ of sexual violence as rape cases rise”* reported that:

“More than 4 million women and girls are at risk of sexual violence across Sudan, [according to the World Health Organization](#).

The Darfur Women Action Group and the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of [Africa](#) (SIHA), two campaign groups, have both documented cases of women being kidnapped by the RSF for ransom. They are often raped while they are held hostage. Many have been taken to Chad or kept as sex slaves.

Several rapes documented by SIHA in Khartoum happened when women tried to retrieve documents from their abandoned homes, only to find them occupied by the RSF. Other women were seized from the streets.

“The testimonies all point towards the RSF,” says Hala Al-Karib, the regional director at SIHA. “We have testimonies of women who have been raped in front of their families. In Omdurman, a mother and her three daughters were all raped in front of each other.”

A woman recently assisted by Save the Children was raped when a group of armed fighters burst into her family’s Khartoum home and threatened to kill them all unless they gave them a daughter. Two other girls helped by the NGO were raped in front of their father in Khartoum. One of them later died from her injuries, while her father died from suspected shock.

“The number of cases is huge,” says Katharina von Schroeder, a spokesperson for Save the Children.

In Darfur, the pattern of sexual violence reflects the genocidal war of the mid-2000s, says Ishaq. During that conflict, Kalashnikov-wielding Arab militias known as the Janjaweed targeted members of sub-Saharan African groups in the region.

“It is the same way as it happened before,” says Ishaq.

Today's RSF grew out of the Janjaweed, with most perpetrators never being held accountable for their crimes committed two decades ago. "On the contrary, they were promoted and given access to resources and business, and now they are carrying on as they were before," says Al-Karib. "This violence doesn't happen in a vacuum."

Women played a prominent role in the revolution that toppled the former dictator, Omar al-Bashir, and threatened the grip of military actors over Sudan's politics and economy. Neimat Ahmadi, the president and founder of the Darfur Women Action Group, says: "Because of that, they are targeted."

Last week, a group of UN human rights experts said the RSF were using rape and other sexual violence "as tools to punish and terrorise communities", citing reports of hundreds of women being kept as slaves to be raped in degrading conditions.

Save the Children has warned that children as young as 12 are being raped, with some "targeted specifically for their ethnicity as well as their gender".

Ishaq fears the level of sexual violence will increase if the fighting reaches new areas. She is also worried about the mental health of her staff as they continue their documentation work."

(Source: The Guardian – [Women in Sudan facing a 'tragedy' of sexual violence as rape cases rise](#), 29 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UN Security Council, reference exploitation of girls in Sudan:

"[...] recent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are deeply concerning. In 2022, the United Nations documented 96 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including abductions, attempted rape and gang rape, affecting 63 women and 33 girls. The majority of victims were displaced women and girls who were often attacked while leaving camps in order to attend school or engage in essential livelihood activities. The perpetrators included armed nomads and other unknown armed men. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces were also implicated [...]"

"Numerous allegations of sexual violence arose in the context of protests against the military takeover. In 2022, the United Nations documented attacks, including gang rape, rape and attempted rape, against 24 victims, including women, men and boys, during or after protests. The police, including the Central Reserve Police, were implicated in six incidents; the others were attributed to members of other security forces (Sudanese Police Force, Sudanese Armed Forces, Rapid Support Forces and General Intelligence Service). In two incidents, protesters seeking refuge from a violent crowd dispersal by the security forces were pursued and sexually assaulted. Incidents of sexual violence took place during interrogation by the joint security forces, as well as in detention settings. Owing to the fear of reprisals and a lack of trust in the justice system, only eight of the victims lodged official complaints. The authorities established a committee, headed by a public prosecutor, to investigate human rights violations committed since the military takeover. [...]"

(Source: Reliefweb, UN Security Council – [Conflict-related sexual violence – Report of the Secretary-General \(S/2023/413\)](#), 14 July 2023, pg. 21, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there other child-specific risks or forms of persecution? Such as kidnapping or unlawful adoptions?

The African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported the use of social media, particularly Facebook, by families of missing persons in Sudan to make public announcements due to limited access to the justice system:

"Resort to Social Media

Due to a lack of access to the justice system, families of missing persons have turned to social media, particularly Facebook, to make public announcements. However, a simple analysis of these posts reveals that the announcements

for missing women and girls are not at the same level as those for missing males. Since the outbreak of war, 450 missing persons have been announced, but the announcements for missing women and girls only began in June 2023, with 18 cases published. Additionally, there are cases that were published among the lists issued by human rights groups since the eruption of the April war. In June 2023, media outlets reported that the Sudanese Group for Victims of Enforced Disappearance had officially reported disappearance cases based on lists of missing persons obtained via phone conversations with their families, using phone numbers attached to their names.”

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam](#), January 2024, pg. 4-5, last accessed 24 May 2024)

The African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported that:

“Eyewitnesses

[...]seven eyewitnesses from Dar Al-Salam district, located 45 kilometers southeast of Al-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, explained that on July 22, 2023, three girls under the age of 20 were released in the Wada’a area for ransom to their kidnappers. The kidnappers, three persons wearing RSF’s uniforms, were on their way to the state of East Darfur. The ransom of 9 billion Sudanese pounds, equivalent to 3 billion U.S. dollars or \$18,500, was paid to free the girls. The sum was placed in a new tank, and the victims were returned to their families in Khartoum. The eyewitnesses added that the abduction operation took place in Khartoum, and one of the RSF members who had been abducted from Khartoum denied it, as he put it.

Tayba, a farmer in the Korma area, said that the road to Kabkabiya witnessed scores of girls being taken away in the vehicles of gunmen who had fled the battles in Khartoum. She added that local communities have shown their utter helplessness in the face of innocent victims while waving their hands to rescue the gunmen.

Local residents, including the families of the kidnappers, confirmed that in early June, coinciding with the end of battles between the army and the RSF, and after the RSF took control of the city, more than 20 cars loaded with boxes arrived. Some of the boxes showed girls tied to chains. Three of them appeared in Damrah Seh Jannah, 15 kilometers north of Kutum.

Kidnappers and Feeling of Guiltiness

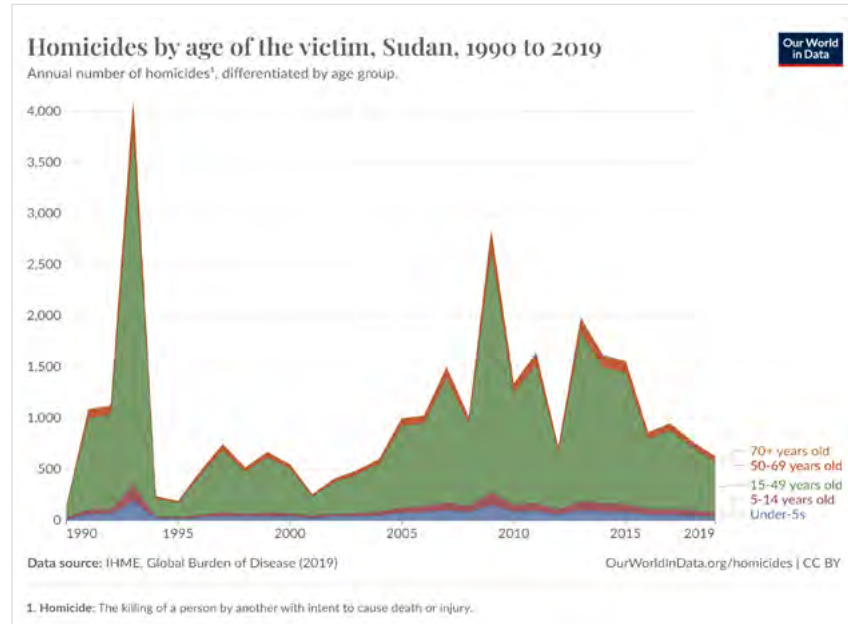
On the other hand, Umm Al-Naim, a woman living in Damarah Shurfa, 60 kilometers southwest of Al-Fashir, confirmed the involvement of two of her sons and others in the ranks of the RSF in kidnapping eight girls from the battles in Khartoum in May 2023. They are now being used as sex workers with a number of devastations, including a heart and a cave on a balcony in the area of Kolki, west of Al-Fashir in North Darfur. She also revealed that Damrah Qab and the municipality of Dar Al-Salam have become a crossing point for abducting girls and taking them to different areas. Um Al-Naim called on the Rapid Support Command to intervene to rescue the kidnapped girls, expressing her sorrow, and revealed that the current war and the various violations resulting from the right conscience are unacceptable.

On the other hand, a number of eyewitnesses from the city of Kabkabiya, 136 kilometers west of Al-Fasher, the capital of the state of North Darfur, revealed the emergence of more than 20 abductees, some of whom were deported to the area of Ghara Al-Zawiya between Kabkabkabiya and Saraf Umra, and some of them remained in the village mosque until mid-June 2023, after some of the families of the kidnappers refused this phenomenon in the hope that putting them in the village mosque would help save them with the intervention of some good people. The source suggested that these girls were kidnapped from Khartoum.”

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam](#), 13 January 2024, pp. 7-8, last accessed 24 May 2024)

Are the homicide rates concerning children analysed by age and by groups?

Our World in Data provides a breakdown of data from “Homicides by age of the victim, 1990 to 2019” for groupings including children:



(Source: Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network – [Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 \(GBD 2019\) Results, Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation \(IHME\)](#), 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network published the following data on death by interpersonal violence in Sudan for both sexes and children falling into each age group (e.g., 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19)³³. The data includes an estimated value (val), an upper estimate (upper), and a lower estimate (lower) for each age group:

Location	Sex	Age	Year	Val	Upper	Lower
Sudan	Female	<5 years	2019	17.20018	36.72723	6.777304
Sudan	Female	5-9	2019	7.981662	16.68583	3.397836
Sudan	Female	10-14	2019	7.177439	13.91362	3.418187
Sudan	Female	15-19	2019	15.66979	33.98987	6.470761

Location	Sex	Age	Year	Val	Upper	Lower
Sudan	Male	<5 years	2019	22.33025	49.59278	8.114156
Sudan	Male	5-9	2019	10.96028	24.01156	3.719351
Sudan	Male	10-14	2019	15.52738	31.01875	6.326799
Sudan	Male	15-19	2019	70.71843	135.2878	27.27218

(Source: Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network – [Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 \(GBD 2019\) Results. Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation \(IHME\)](#), 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The scientific online publication Our World in Data provides comprehensive data and analysis on homicide rates globally. It should be noted that the information available for Sudan is only up until 2015, and that the absence of information is not information of absence:

³³ To break down data an account is needed for this source.



(Source: Our World in Data – [Interactive Charts on Homicides](#), last accessed 22 March 2024)

What cultural, social, or traditional norms and practices or policies affecting children prevail in Sudan?

Fikra for Studies and Development³⁴, a Sudanese nonpartisan think-tank focused on in-depth research addressing critical political, social, and economic issues in Sudan. Published the following report in March 2024:

“Socio-cultural Context of SGBV in Sudan

The majority of women and girls in Sudan are constrained by socio-cultural limitations due to patriarchal norms that disempower them from accessing education and financial resources. Power to grant consent individually and make decisions regarding their own lives has often been limited or taken away from women and girls entirely. For example, 21% of girls aged 15-19 in Sudan are currently married, and among them, 11.9% were married before 15 years of age. These statistics are particularly relevant because issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM/C) and access and ability to determine family planning methods are often linked to early marriage.”²

² Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan, Final Report

(Source: Fikra for Studies and Development – [Unbreakable: Sudanese Women’s Struggle Against Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#), 8 March 2024, pp. 17-18, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this article “Amal, a young woman sentenced to stoning in Sudan” published in 2022, the International Federation for Human Rights reported that:

“[...]On 26 June 2022, the Kosti Criminal Court in White Nile State, Sudan, sentenced Amal¹, a 20-year-old woman, to death by stoning, after she was found guilty of violating article 146 (2) (adultery) of the Sudanese Penal Code 1991.

[...] Most cases of adultery in Sudan are issued against women, highlighting the discriminatory application of Sudan’s criminal legislation, in violation of international law which guarantees equality before the law and non-discrimination based on gender.

Amal is a 20-year-old Sudanese woman, living in White Nile State. After separating from her husband, she had reluctantly moved back to her family’s home. ACJPS has been reliably informed that she was interrogated by a police investigator who allegedly illegally obtained a confession from her. He did not inform Amal that the information she shared during her interrogation would be used as evidence against her during her trial.²

³⁴ Taken from their own website: “Fikra is a Sudanese nonpartisan think-tank focused on in-depth research addressing critical political, social, and economic issues in Sudan. Dedicated to fostering progressive reform, it aims to redefine public debates and contribute to the country’s development, democracy, and peace. Fikra operates with a commitment to unbiased knowledge through independent inquiry, seeking solutions to major public problems.”

Amal's trial was also tainted with several irregularities. For example, her trial commenced without a formal complaint from the police in Kotsi. Amal was also denied legal representation at the trial phase, despite the guarantees to representation set out under Article 135(3) of the Sudanese Criminal Procedure Code 1991, which provides that a defendant is entitled to legal representation in any criminal case that carries a punishment of 10 years or more imprisonment, amputation, or death. Since the handing down of a decision by the Kosti Criminal Court, authorities have failed to refer the file to the high court for approval.

Amal's lawyer has appealed her case to the higher court. In the last 10 years, Sudan witnessed several cases similar to hers where the sentences were overturned when they were appealed.

[...] Background information

[...] The situation is particularly dire for women who are subjected to systemic violence across the country. In the past ten months, at least 13 cases of sexual and gender-based violence committed by the security forces were reported by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) during the protests in Khartoum on 19 December 2021 as well as concerning reports of sexual harassment and intimidation targeting women participating in the sit-ins. From May to August 2022, United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission In Sudan (UNITAMS) reported that sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, accounted for 35 victims (22 women and 13 girls) throughout Sudan. None of the survivors received justice, remedy, or any reparation. In a culture dominated by the concept of shame and with no access to justice, silence is the preferred option. Setbacks to women's rights are being witnessed all over Sudan. From 1996 up to 2019, the Khartoum State Public Order Law gave the police extensive discretionary powers to arrest people and targeted women, particularly. Many women were beaten and arrested for their dress or for vending in the streets. Abolished during the transition, authorities have now issued in August 2022 a decision to reinstall the law under a new name, the Community Police Service. Women and girls are being once again the target of oppressive laws that violate freedoms and human rights."

¹ The first name is an alias. Our organisations have been asked by Amal's lawyer to preserve her anonymity in public communications.

² Sudanese law does not require authorities to inform detainees of their right to consult a lawyer at the interrogation phase, in violation of its international human rights obligations as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other treaties to which Sudan is a party. Similarly, Amal was not informed of the reasons for her arrest or the charges against her.

(Source: Fidh – [Amal, a young woman sentenced to stoning in Sudan](#), 19 October 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports on harmful traditional practices affecting children based on tradition, culture, religion and superstition and are they affecting girls and boys differently (e.g., FGM, forced/underage child marriages, witchcraft accusations, ritual/honour killings,..)? [Cross-reference with Part D, when appropriate.](#)

The Freedom House 2023 report on Sudan responded to the following question: "Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?":

"Although the transitional government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in April 2021, it failed to endorse provisions recognizing equality in marriage, divorce, and parenting, which Sharia-based laws deny women. Among other restrictions, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man. In 2019, the transitional government repealed the Public Order Act, which had been used in part to punish women for dress or behavior deemed indecent. However, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, an Indigenous African women's rights advocacy group, reported in September 2021 that women continued to be punished for "morality transgressions."

Sexual violence against women remains a major problem. A UN report released in August 2021 claimed there were high numbers of incidents of domestic and sexual violence in households; family sexual violence against women, in informal jobs, displaced and refugee women outside of camps, children in Quranic schools, and people with

disabilities; forced, arranged, and child marriages; female genital mutilation (FGM); and restricted access to financial resources and educational opportunities. In 2020, the transitional government criminalized FGM.”

(Source: Freedom House – [Freedom in the World 2023: Sudan](#), 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The U.S. Department of State 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan documented the case of a young woman prosecuted for adultery:

“Government Practices

[...] On June 26, White Nile State Court sentenced a 20-year-old woman to death by stoning for allegedly committing adultery in Kosti, White Nile State. According to her lawyers, family members forced the woman to marry her cousin; she was trying to separate from him when she entered a relationship with a male companion. Another cousin found the woman with her companion and beat the companion to death. When searching the companion’s cell phone, police were able to identify the woman, who admitted to being intimate with the victim at other times. Authorities then charged the woman with adultery and considered her a witness to the murder of her alleged lover. The cousin who killed the companion told the court he was protecting the “honor of the family,” and observers believed the adultery charges against her strengthened his defense. As of November 21, the White Nile Court of Appeals annulled the decision to sentence the woman to stoning and ordered the case be returned to the lower court for judicial review, noting the woman was not given a fair trial and there were numerous technical issues with the prosecution. The court indicated that police and the courts did not provide the woman with required legal protection; the judge did not fully explain the consequences of confessing to the crime; she was forced to marry her cousin without consent; and the woman and her male companion were not engaged in intimate acts when they were discovered. As of December 15, media outlets reported that Kosti Criminal Court Judge Haroun Adam overturned the decision to sentence her to stoning and ordered her case to be retried. He then sentenced the woman to six months in Kosti Women’s Prison.”

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2022 International Religious Freedom Report](#), 2022, pg. 10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF in its 2021 Annual report:

“[...]The country’s economic struggle increased families’ exposure to poverty, especially in urban areas. The rising food basket cost – as a percentage of the average income – is manifested in widespread malnutrition rates, especially in the Darfur and eastern states, the number of out-of-school children climbed to over three million children as parents were forced to choose between food, schooling, health and other necessities. Girls were particularly affected. Gold mining came late as new a livelihood and much in relation to child marriage causing high drop-out among boys and girls.[...]”

Data on child marriage shows an increasing trend of children marrying before their fifteenth birthday, with the highest prevalence in South Darfur state. The increase might be due to factors such as rising poverty, and family honour. Nationally, around 38 per cent of girls marries before their eighteenth birthday, however recent numbers from the Simple Spatial Survey Method (S3M, 2018), show that 64.6 per cent of women with children younger than five years were married when still a child. Further, one fifth of women, aged 20-24, in Sudan had her first child before she reached eighteen years.

The adoption of new legislative frameworks, strategies and action plans on FGM laid the groundwork for significant political change. Awareness raising efforts on the harmful consequences on FGM contributed to less women aged 20-24 years being cut before the age of 14 (from 31 to 28 per cent) S3M 2019/20. In addition, thanks to collective efforts, the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM) was criminalised, and a significant decrease in the practice among children under the age of 15 years was observed.”(pp. 5-6)

(Source: UNICEF – [SUDAN: Gender 2021 Annual Report](#), 2022, pp. 5-6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

4.3. Civil rights and freedoms in Sudan

Is freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of association and peaceful assembly available for all children without discrimination? If not, explain.

On its webpage, the Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) describes a number of violent incidents in Sudan involving attacks on religious sites and figures, including both Christian churches and Muslim mosques, in May 2023:

“CSW sources report that the gunmen came to the church in a car and shot four men, including a priest named Arsenius, and his son. They also stabbed the church guard before looting the building for two hours.

All five victims received treatment at a private hospital and have since recovered; however, they were unable to access the largest hospital in the area as it is currently under the control the Rapid Support Forces (RSF, formerly the Janjaweed militia), and its electricity has been cut off by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), with whom the RSF has been in conflict since 15 April 2023.

Elsewhere, the RSF forcibly evacuated all priests, including His Grace Bishop Elia, the Bishop of Khartoum and South Sudan, from Mary’s Coptic Orthodox Church on Nile Street in Khartoum on 14 May in order to use the premises as a military base. The RSF had reportedly been intimidating and harassing those in the church for a week before they forced them to leave.

A similar incident was reported on 3 May when the Coptic Church in Khartoum North (Bahri) was attacked.

Mosques have also been attacked as violence continues across the country. On 14 May the Al Zareeba mosque was bombed in El Geneina, West Darfur, where fighting is particularly intense. According to the Preliminary Committee of Sudan Doctor’s Trade Union, 280 people were killed and more than 160 were injured in the region between 12-13 May.

There have also been reports of the bombings of mosques in the Alazhari and Burri Al Daraissa areas of Khartoum; one person was killed in the latter.”

(Source: CSW – [More places of worship attacked amid continuing violence](#), 16 May 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In its 2022 Overview of recent restrictions to civic freedoms, in Sudan, Civicus reported that children were among those detained and have faced ill-treatment in detention:

“Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Coup: Repression of protest

[...] A report by the Darfur Bar Association, the Emergency Lawyers’ Group, People’s Legal Aid Centre (PLACE) and Redress found that two types of arrests have taken place: protesters have been arrested during or after protests and people have been arrested under the emergency law in their homes or at known gathering places. Detainees gave accounts of experiencing physical violence and ill-treatment while being transported to a detention centre, including this 16-year-old:

‘I suffered from all kinds of beatings [that] you can imagine, [including] flogging, beating by sticks with nails, kicking with military boots, and an [officer] jumped on my entire body with both legs. I was hit in the eye with a fist [wearing] a large ring, and my forehead and eyes were hit with the butt of the gun. When we got to the police station after three or four hours, we were completely naked. They tore off our clothes with knives.’

Similar accounts were documented by Human Rights Watch. One mother told the organisation:

‘I saw my son bleeding and badly beaten. He was topless. When I requested that my son be medically examined, the police told me: ‘We will release your son without charges, but you will not sue us’.

Redress has highlighted that the health of protesters in detention continues to deteriorate. For example, on 5 May 2022 Saif al-Islam was detained under article 182 of the Criminal Code on criminal mischief. He has allegedly been subjected to ‘severe torture while in detention’. A medical examination revealed that he suffered injuries to his bladder and stomach, leaving him requiring hospitalisation. However, he has not received hospital treatment and remains in detention at the time of writing.

Most of those arrested have been charged under Code 1991 on charges of public nuisance, breach of public safety and offences related to ‘public tranquillity’, including rioting. Some protesters have been charged with offences such as possession or use of drugs or indecent dress, while in a few cases protesters have faced charges for more serious crimes, such as criminal damage or ‘causing wounds’. However, minors who were detained have not charged. Instead, their parents have been summoned and asked to sign a ‘personal pledge’ to ensure their child refrains from participating in future protests. Many detainees have been denied access to legal representation and their families. Some detainees have been forcibly disappeared as they have been held in unknown locations.

Between 25 October 2021 and 10 April 2022, the UN Expert on human rights in Sudan documented the arbitrary arrest and detention of 1,293 people for opposing the coup or protesting against it, of whom 143 were women and 157 were children, including two girls. This figure does not include those held for short periods and released without charge and it is estimated that the real figures are much higher. At the time of writing, arrests and detentions are ongoing.” (pg. 5)

(Source: Civicus – [Sudan: Overview of recent restrictions to civic freedoms](#), October 2022, pp. 4-5, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The US DOS 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan documented the killing of three children due to their father’s position as a Catholic Church deacon:

“Government Practices

[...] According to Islamic personal status laws, Christians (including children) may not inherit assets from a Muslim. Children of mixed (e.g., Muslim-Christian) marriages are considered Muslim and may inherit assets.

CSW reported that on July 13, three children died from an “extremist” arson attack in Garsilla, Central Darfur. Their father, a Catholic Church deacon, died on November 21 due to suspected poisoning, during which the attackers reportedly called it the “kafir’s house.” According to CSW, this was religiously motivated. The family filed a police report regarding the suspected poisoning. As of year’s end, the police had not conducted an investigation into the death of the children or the father. Local news media did not report further on the identity of the attackers.”

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2022 International Religious Freedom Report](#), 2022, pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children able to express themselves freely (without any risks) in practice? Do children have access to adequate information, through books, television, internet?

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explains that:

“[...]the internet this morning was down throughout Sudan along with telecommunications, Zain in particular was down. And if it is the case that the Rapid Support Forces with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates have created their own internet service maybe using Starlink, they can afford to shut down communications, both telephonic and web-based communications because they won’t use it. And they know that if the Sudan Armed Forces can’t use it, they’re blind in some important sense to what’s going on. And atrocity crimes can’t be reported because those who would report atrocity crimes are the ones most likely to be dependent upon web services or WhatsApp or other communications. We’ve been fortunate in Zamzam. I had to buy a generator so they could continue to charge their cell phones. But one of the coordinating counsellors for the project got a European SIM card. So she was able to use that in her phone, and that’s how we’ve been communicating. But I’m now extremely worried about how we will

communicate if the communications are as compromised as they seem to be, and the information you're getting now from me won't get any better as it goes on."

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

During a discussion on the OHCHR High Commissioner's oral update on the situation of human rights in Sudan, a representative of CSW commented on the killing of a child by security personnel during a demonstration:

"This interactive dialogue occurs days after the death of 15-year-old Ibrahim Majzoub, who was shot and killed by security personnel in Khartoum while participating in a peaceful demonstration; a stark reminder of the cost the Sudanese people continue to pay at the hands of a military that uses lethal force with impunity against those exercising their fundamental rights."

(Source: CSW – [HRC52: Oral statement on the situation of human rights in Sudan](#), 3 March 2023)

In this press release, 92 humanitarian, civil society, human rights organisations and members of the #KeepItOn coalition³⁵, urgently call for the re-establishment of telecommunications infrastructure across Sudan:

"[...] A nationwide telecommunication shutdown in February 2024 left almost 30 million Sudanese¹ without access to the internet or telephone calls for more than a month. Across the country, those experiencing the horrors of war have been separated from and unable to contact their families and loved ones. While some levels of services were restored in the east of the country, large swathes of territory remain disconnected from the network providers, such as Zain, MTN and Sudani – namely the Darfur region, and parts of Khartoum and the Kordofans. The same areas are also the most exposed to conflict and risk of famine, making the consequences of telecommunications blackout even more life-threatening. In some areas cut-off from broader telecommunications, the only available service has been via satellite connectivity devices such as Starlink. While the cost of satellite services is prohibitive to most civilians and there are significant restrictions on the importation of satellite equipment, such services remain critical for both international humanitarian organizations and local responders to remain operational in Sudan. While there remain valid concerns around the use of this technology—and other telecommunications systems—by the parties to the conflict, the potential shutdown of Starlink (as announced in April 2024) would have a disproportionate impact on civilians and the aid organizations who are trying to reach them."

(Source: Relfieweb – [92 NGOs urgently call for the re-establishment of telecommunications infrastructure across Sudan](#), 15 May 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Child Act (2010) states that:

"Chapter II General Principles

5.2 (j) there shall be guaranteed, for a Child, the right to express his opinions and desires with every freedom, and to actually take part in the special judicial, administrative, social or instructional procedure, in accordance with the age of the Child and degree of his maturity; (pg. 8)[...]

Victim Children rights

8.3 (c) allowing the showing of opinions of victim Children, their needs and the occupations thereof, and consider the same during the suits, which affect their personal interests, in such way, as may be compatible with the procedural rules of the law;" (pg. 45)

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children's Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2009, pp. 8-45, last accessed 23 May 2024)

³⁵ A list of members of the #KeepItOn Coalition can be found on the [Access Now website](#).

Do children have access to appropriate (legal) advice?

According to this Human Rights Watch article, published in April 2022 and “Hundreds of Protesters Detained, Mistreated” reported that:

“[...]Despite the process mandated under Sudanese law, security authorities transfer detainees to prisons without bringing them before a prosecutor, judge, or court. Prison authorities also deny detainees access to their families and legal counsel. Three former detainees from Soba prison and one woman from Omdurman’s women’s prison said that they were denied visits while they were in prison for between two and four weeks.

Male detainees in Soba prison said that all those detained in connection with the protests were kept in three cells, two large and one small. Two detainees said that at least two children were in their cell.

Former detainees, lawyers, and relatives said that prison officials repeatedly said that they did not have control over the custody of those held in connection with the protests, that they were only “hosts,” with some explicitly stating that the detainees were under General Intelligence Service custody.

On February 7, a 19-year-old woman was detained at a protest and taken to Omdurman women’s prison. Her mother tried to reach her there: “We went to GIS, police, and the office of attorney general – they just sent us around. A police contact said to me, ‘I can’t help. Those detainees are [the] responsibility of GIS. They say your daughter is a troublemaker organizing protests and this is why they are detaining her and others there.’” The 19-year-old was held without access to her relatives or legal counsel for two weeks[...]

Lawyers said that prison officials refused the lawyers’ repeated requests to meet with clients detained in connection with the protests. Prison officials would only allow monitored written communications, an offer the lawyers rejected.”

(Source: Human Rights Watch (HRW) – [Sudan: Hundreds of Protesters Detained, Mistreated](#), 28 April 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do children have access to independent complaints procedures?

In the article “Sudan: Hundreds of Protesters Detained, Mistreated,” published on April 28, 2022, Human Rights Watch documents the detention and mistreatment of numerous protesters in Sudan:

“Abuses, Ill-Treatment, and Torture of Children

Children who took part in the protests have not been spared ill-treatment or arbitrary detention.

The parents of four detained boys said that the police did not inform them of their children’s whereabouts.

The mother of Mohamed Adam, the 17-year-old detained on January 17 in connection with the killing of a police commander, was only allowed to visit him on February 8. A lawyer accompanying her said Adam described being tortured and that he could see marks consistent with torture and ill-treatment on Adam’s body: “He said to us he was tortured by hammering nails into his leg, police beating his injured leg, and he was tied and held upside down.... I also saw cigarette burns on his skin.”

Adam told his lawyers that he had appeared before a judge, but the judge ignored his complaint about his mistreatment.

On February 24, police detained a 16-year-old boy in Omdurman alongside two other children while dispersing a protest. The boy’s mother said that her son had described being detained by a mix of security forces, including CRP, regular police, anti-riot police, SAF, and other men in civilian clothes, who had beaten the boys with fists, gun butts, and batons, and that some members of the force cut the boys clothes off with a knife, stripping them naked.

His mother found him and the other two children at the Omdurman central police station that evening. She said they had marks from the beatings and were wearing oversized jallabiyas [a traditional item of clothing that runs from the neck to the ankle] and were almost naked underneath. “When I complained about this abusive treatment, a police officer there told me: ‘Well, they didn’t arrest your son from his house for doing nothing, he was protesting.’”

In an April report, Redress, the Emergency Lawyers Group, and the People’s Legal Aid Center (PLACE) – a local legal aid group, said that children are generally not charged with criminal offenses but released on guarantees that they won’t take part in protests again. Parents of three children said that the police pressured them into dropping complaints against them for ill-treatment.

A lawyer in Port Sudan said that police in Port Sudan, the capital of Red Sea state, arrested 10 children and held them for hours. The father of a 14-year-old boy who was among them found his son at a police station with his head partially shaved: “It was humiliating and degrading ... he told me he was beaten by the police upon arrest before they threatened to kill him if he joined protests again.” The father said they released his son on bail, but when he asked the police for a form allowing them to get a medical examination for his injuries, the police hinted that such a step would have consequences for his son.

These detentions violate international protections for children, in particular as provided for in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Sudan is a party. Both treaties prohibit torture as well as any humiliating or degrading treatment of children and require that their best interests be paramount in all decisions and actions relating to child suspects or detainees.

Article 37 of the CRC provides that “The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.” Both treaties set out a series of safeguards for children in detention when it is absolutely necessary to arrest them, none of which have been observed by Sudan in their treatment of child protestors.”

(Source: HRW – [Sudan: Hundreds of Protesters Detained, Mistreated](#), 28 April 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children protected by law against interference with their privacy? (In chronological order)

The Child Act (2010) protects a child’s right to privacy during legal proceedings:

“79. Secrecy of sittings

The privacy right of the Child shall be respected, during the sittings of trial, to avoid any injury, as may affect him; and no information, relating to his appearance before any court, shall be published, save by permission of the Child Court. (pg. 42)

[...]

83.1 Victim Children rights

(e) protection of privacy and identity of the victim Children, and taking the necessary measures, to avoid publication of such information, as can lead to recognize such victim Children; (pg. 46)”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2009, pp. 42-46, last accessed 23 May 2024)

A Freedom House report on internet freedoms responded to questions regarding internet users’ right to privacy:

“C. Violations of User Rights

[...] In July 2020, the TSC amended the 2010 National Security Law; Article 25 of the law previously granted the NISS broad authority to surveil, interrogate, and arrest people in Sudan. While the amendments included several

important reforms, Article 25 of the amended law still grants the GIS “the right to request information, data, documents or things from any person and view or keep them.”¹⁷⁰ A former telecommunications engineer suggests that the amended version of Article 25 has been interpreted to permit security services to “lawfully violate a citizen’s privacy without asking for any permission.”¹⁷¹

The NISS regularly intercepts private email messages with the aid of sophisticated surveillance technologies. An industry source argued that he has strong reason to believe that the NISS has purchased surveillance equipment to facilitate interception at the landing stations in Port Sudan, though it remains unclear if the implementation was a success and whether the current authorities have access to the equipment.¹⁷² Another pressing issue is the lawful interception clause in the contracts users sign with telecommunication companies, which is intentionally broad and gives the authorities the right to tape one’s phone without clear evidence of criminal conduct or an ongoing investigation.¹⁷³

[...] Service providers are required to aid the government in the surveillance of their users. In one December 2020 case, such privacy violations may have facilitated an extrajudicial killing.

[...] The SIM card registration process links phone numbers to users’ personal data, which enables government surveillance (see C4). Mobile service providers are obligated to keep records of their customers’ data, including full names, full addresses, other phone numbers, and place of employment. Under the Telecommunications Law of 2018, telecommunications companies must provide customer data to authorities upon request.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁰ “Sudan Legal Amendments Explanatory Table,” Redress, July 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220206194536/https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/3-REDRESS-Sudan-Legal-Amendments-July-2020-Explanatory-Table.pdf/>

¹⁷¹ Khattab Hamad, “Sudan’s revised cybercrime law falls short on its promise,” Global Voices, March 4, 2021, <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2021/03/04/sudans-revised-cybercrime-law-falls-short-on-its-promise/>

¹⁷² Interview with K.B, an industry source, February and March 2021.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Author’s research.

(Source: Freedom House – [Sudan: Freedom on the Net 2022](#), 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children protected by law against torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment? Are there known cases of children (how many, in which region, what age, sex) that have been subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment?

UN experts respond to reports of brutal and widespread use of rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) during the four-month-old internal armed conflict in Sudan:

“[...] While calling on both parties to the conflict to end violations of humanitarian and human rights law, the experts expressed specific concern at consistent reports of widespread violations by the RSF, including reports that women and girls have been subjected to enforced disappearance and acts tantamount thereto, forced to work, and sexually exploited. Reportedly, hundreds of women have been detained by the RSF, held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery.

“Sudanese women and girls in urban centers as well as in Darfur have been particularly vulnerable to violence. The lives and safety of migrant and refugee women and girls, primarily from Eritrea and South Sudan, have also been seriously affected,” they said.

“It is alleged that men identified as members of the RSF are using rape and sexual violence of women and girls as tools to punish and terrorise communities. Some of the reported rapes appear to be ethnically and racially motivated,” the experts said.”

(Source: OHCHR – [UN experts alarmed by reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by RSF in Sudan](#), 17 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UN and local human rights groups believe that only a fraction of incidents of sexual violence are being reported:

“The UN Human Rights office in Sudan said in early July that it had received reports of 21 incidents of sexual violence against at least 57 women and girls.

UN human rights chief Volker Türk noted that “the RSF has been identified as the perpetrator” in almost all cases reported to his office.

Both the UN and local rights groups believe these numbers are only a fraction of the real scale of the crime.”

(Source: BBC News – [Sudan conflict: Women tell BBC horror stories of rape](#), 31 July 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Child Act (2010) states:

“Chapter II

General Principles

5.2

(k) this Act ensures the protection of a male, or female Child, against all types and forms of violence, injury, inhuman treatment, or bodily, ethical or sexual abuse, or neglect or exploitation; (pg. 9)

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2009, pg. 9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there evidence of harassment, intimidation, detention or threats against children because of their affiliation with parents/relatives that hold a certain political opinion, or because of their membership in a particular (social) group?

Human rights groups have documented ethnically targeted violence towards Masalit peoples in West Darfur, including children:

“While the fighting in Khartoum did not take a racial or ethnic turn¹⁹, the spread of the fighting into West Darfur, one of the five Darfur states, reignited the ethnic conflict from the past.²⁰ UNHCR noted that the fighting between the SAF and the RSF ‘unleashed a markedly ethnic or intercommunal dimension igniting tribal rivalries’, which affected West Darfur in particular.²¹ Amnesty International (AI) reported on ‘ethnically targeted violence’ by the RSF and other Arab militias, mostly aimed against ethnic Masalit men and boys, in the town of El Geneina, West Darfur.²² In a report from 11 July 2023, Human Rights Watch wrote that the RSF and allied Arab militias ‘summarily executed at least 28 ethnic Massalit’ in West Darfur.²³”

¹⁹ BBC News, Sudan conflict: Women tell BBC horror stories of rape, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

²⁰ AI, Sudan: “Death came to our home”: War crimes and civilian suffering in Sudan, 3 August 2023, Index Number: AFR 54/7037/2023, [url](#), pp. 18-26; UNHCR, UNHCR Protection Brief – Sudan – July 2023, 16 July 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²¹ UNHCR, UNHCR Protection Brief – Sudan – July 2023, 16 July 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²² AI, Sudan: “Death came to our home”: War crimes and civilian suffering in Sudan, 3 August 2023, Index Number: AFR 54/7037/2023, [url](#), p. 18

²³ HRW, Sudan: Darfur Town Destroyed, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

(Source: EUAA – [Security and political developments in Sudan, particularly in the Khartoum state, including civilian impacts](#), 11 August 2023, pg. 4, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this news article “Sudan civilians killed and shot as they flee Darfur city by foot,” published by the Middle East Monitor on January 20, 2023, the incidents of civilians being killed and shot while fleeing a city in Darfur are reported:

“Competition for land has long been a driver of conflict in Darfur. Villages on the road from El Geneina to Adre used to be Masalit, but had been settled by Arab tribes since 2003, Ibrahim said.

Several witnesses from El Geneina, largely cut off from phone networks for weeks, said darker skinned non-Arabs were being targeted, especially the Masalit.

One resident who arrived in Chad on 15 June, Abdel Nasser Abdullah, told Reuters his house was one of many in his neighbourhood that was stormed, and that his cousin was killed while he hid on the roof.

“They are not only looking for the Masalit, but anyone Black,” he said, adding that the streets of the city were strewn with bodies, including those of women and children.

“I faced many problems – beating, shooting and humiliation,” he said of his journey by foot to Chad. “It’s the Janjaweed, wearing RSF clothes, and others plain clothes. All have their faces covered.””

(Source: Middle East Monitor – [Sudan civilians killed and shot at as they flee Darfur city by foot](#), 20 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

On July 13, three children were killed in an arson attack on their home. Their father was a Catholic Church Deacon and died in November 2022:

“The home of the late Deacon Azrag Barnab was set alight at midnight by extremists who called it the ‘Kafir’s house’. Mr Barnab’s six-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter died in the fire. His older son, aged 11, managed to escape, but died several days later in hospital from his injuries.

Mr Barnab died in hospital in November 2021 in a suspected poisoning. The family filed a police report on his case, but authorities failed to investigate the circumstances surrounding his death sufficiently.”

(Source: CSW – [Three children killed in arson attack on deacon’s home](#), 23 August 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)



Demographic overview and basic rights of children

5. Basic rights in Sudan

5.1. Food, water, housing

Are there any reports on the denial of food, water and housing to (certain groups of) children?

In this news article, the UN noted that:

“Close to 25 million people – more than half the population – are estimated to need assistance, with approximately 17.7 million people facing “acute” levels of food insecurity.”

(Source: UN News – [UN agencies warn of imminent starvation risk in Sudan’s Darfur region](#), 3 May 2024, last accessed 29 May 2024)

Reuters also documented in a special report that:

“There is so little food in some areas of Sudan that people are taking extreme measures to survive.

In the Al Lait refugee camp, they are eating dirt.

[...] Garang Achien Akok is one of the thousands of new arrivals in the area. Akok, his wife and their five children abandoned their home in the southern region of Kordofan after Arab militiamen on camels stormed their village and torched their hut, he said.

Akok, 41, reached Al Lait in December, but has no work and can’t feed the family. At times, they go two or three days without eating. When that happens, Akok said, he watches helplessly as his wife and children dig holes in the ground with a stick, slide their hands in and grab some soil. Then they roll the soil into a ball, put it in their mouths and swallow it with water.

[...] In some places, people are already dying. Doctors Without Borders has reported that an estimated one child is dying on average every two hours in the vast Zamzam displaced persons camp in North Darfur – a result of disease and malnutrition

[...] “We tried to avoid picking the leaves from poisonous trees,” she said. “We only used the mango, lemon and guava leaves. The children would eat them. They couldn’t say no because they were so hungry.”

[...] Sahar Moussa, who fled with her husband and three children, says she lived a comfortable life in Khartoum before the war. Her husband made a good living as a mechanical engineer.

When her children tell her they’re hungry, she tells them their father is coming with food, even though she knows he isn’t. “Sometimes I just wish a shell would kill me so I don’t have to see my children crying from hunger,” she said. [...]

At the Al Shahinat displaced persons camp in Port Sudan, sewage flowed openly when a reporter visited last month. Children with stomachs bloated from malnutrition could be seen walking around. Some were barefoot, with streaks down their legs from diarrhea.

The only factory in Sudan making therapeutic food for children suffering from malnutrition was destroyed in the fighting. The plant burned down after being hit by a shell in May last year, said Nada Yagoub, the deputy manager of Samil and daughter of the factory owner.

All production of the product, which treats wasting in small children, has since been halted. Samil used to produce 60% of this therapeutic food for children in Sudan, according to UNICEF, the UN children’s agency.

[...] It took World Vision, a relief agency, four months to secure the required signatures and stamps from authorities to allow the organization to open a cholera treatment center in El Gezira, following reports of an outbreak there.

“I fear that we lost children and mothers to cholera while waiting for the paperwork to be done,” said Geoffrey Babughirana, health and nutrition manager at World Vision. [...]

A survey conducted there earlier this month by Doctors Without Borders found that nearly a third of children under the age of five are acutely malnourished, according to Jerome Tubiana, an adviser to the organization on refugee issues. Eight percent of these children “are at risk of dying within three to six weeks if they don’t get immediate treatment,” he told Reuters.

Zakariya Ali, a doctor there, said he commonly sees “three or four cases of severely malnourished children” a day, and typically, “one of them falls dead.””

(Source: Reuters – [As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves](#), 30 April 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this news article, Sky News reported that more than 100 settlements set on fire with over quarter targeted more than once:

“New analysis, shared exclusively with Sky News, reveals 180 separate incidents of settlements in Sudan being set on fire, with 108 villages, towns and cities affected since the start of the war.

More than a quarter (27%) of the 108 settlements where burnings have been verified by the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) have been targeted more than once since April 2023.

On 15 April, 2023, violent clashes erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Many of these fires have been attributed to the RSF and local level disputes.

Sir Nicholas Kay, a former British ambassador to Sudan, told Sky News the repeated fires may be a “deliberate attempt to... instil a great level of fear and extreme violence to subdue and remove the population”, and “a determined consistent effort to ensure people leave and don’t come back ever”. [...]

One Sudanese human rights worker who spoke anonymously to Sky News said he had been specifically targeted in an assassination attempt for his work doing things like providing water to people whose water sources had been burned and destroyed.[...]

Verified fires detected in Sudan [...]

The Darfur region has experienced the most significant impact from the fires, with the majority of incidents taking place in the West Darfur state.

The highest number of fires took place in in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, along with the village of Misterei. In one instance between 29 May and 2 June 2023, multiple fires were detected in Misterei, mainly inhabited by ethnic Masalit people, who have faced extensive violence from the RSF and allied Arab militias throughout the war. Humans Rights Watch reported that the town came under attack on the morning of 28 May, when RSF and Arab militias allegedly launched an assault on the town.”

(Source: Sky News – [War in Sudan: More than 100 settlements set on fire with over quarter targeted more than once](#), 29 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

MSF describes the situation that has unfolded in Zamzam camp, North Darfur, since the conflict in Sudan began in April 2023:

“A rapid nutrition and mortality assessment carried out by MSF reveals that a catastrophic situation has unfolded in Zamzam camp, North Darfur, since the conflict in Sudan began in April 2023[...]

Almost a quarter of children screened during the assessment were found to be acutely malnourished, with seven per cent having severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Among children aged six months to two years old, the figures were even more stark with nearly 40 per cent of this age group malnourished – 15 per cent with SAM.

The total number of deaths in the camp per day was also cause for extreme alarm, with a crude mortality rate of 2.5 per 10,000 people per day – more than double the emergency threshold. Forty per cent of pregnant and breastfeeding women were also found to be malnourished – another indicator of the intense severity of the situation.[...]

“What we are seeing in Zamzam camp is an absolutely catastrophic situation,” says Claire Nicolet, head of MSF’s emergency response in Sudan. “We estimate that at least one child is dying every two hours in the camp.

“Our current estimate is that there are around 13 child deaths each day. Those with severe malnutrition who have not yet died are at high risk of dying within three to six weeks if they do not get treatment. Their condition is treatable if they can get to a health facility. But many cannot,” says Nicolet.[...]

“Before the start of the conflict in April last year, people in the camp were heavily reliant on international support for food, healthcare, clean water – everything. Now, they have been almost completely abandoned,” says Nicolet.

“There have been no food distributions from the World Food Programme (WFP) since May. When families used to eat two meals a day, now they tell us they are eating only one. People are going hungry – and children are dying as a result.”

Conditions in the camp are atrocious: [...], there is also no clean water supply. People are drinking either from the swamps or from the river, which can cause severe diarrhoea.”

(Source: MSF – [Urgent response needed amid high death rates and malnutrition crisis in North Darfur](#), 5 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this report, published by USAID it is reported that:

“Vulnerable people such as women, children, disabled people, and people with special needs are more prone to protection risk due to lack or inadequate shelter.

Inadequate and unsafe shelter conditions have led to an increase in family separations among IDPs, particularly affecting children. In Gedaref State, for example, more than half of the respondents noted instances where children have been separated from their usual caregivers. Separated children are at increased risk of forced recruitment or exploitation. Prior to the conflict, it was estimated that three to five percent of IDP children in Sudan were unaccompanied. However, due to the ongoing conflict, which has resulted in involuntary family separation and the loss of family members, these numbers are assumed to be much higher. ([UNHCR](#) 16/07/2023, [NRC](#) 22/12/2023).

Women and adolescent girls are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, amongst other protection threats, due to lack of shelter or inadequate shelter- such as shelter with no separated spaces for men and women. The GBV sub-sector in Sudan has reported a significant increase in the number of individuals requiring GBV services, rising from 3.1 million (pre-crisis) to 4.2 million. since April 15, 2023. The actual figures are likely higher, considering unreported cases in inaccessible areas. Most incidents occurred as women were fleeing, while others took place in homes during armed attacks ([UN Women](#) 24/09/2023).

(Source: USAID – [Sudan Crisis: Shelter Thematic Report](#), 31 January 2024, pg. 9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there specific groups of children who face higher rates of homelessness?

According to a January 2024 Chatham House report, quoting the UN, it is noted that of Sudan’s 45 million people, 5.9 million of them are internally displaced.

“The war has caused a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented size. [...]of Sudan’s 45 million people, 5.9 million are internally displaced and 1.4 million have fled as refugees,[...]”

(Source: Chatham House – [Sudan is collapsing – here’s how to stop it](#), 2 February 2024, last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to this USAID Sudan Crisis Report from 31 January 2024:

“The continuation and intensification of hostilities in the past eight months, from the capital to most states in Darfur to Greater Kordofan and Al Jazirah state, have caused unprecedented displacement. IOM estimates that nearly 5.8 million people have been internally displaced since April 15, 2023, making Sudan the country with the largest internally displaced population in the world (IOM 29/12/2023). In recent months, the violence has grown considerably, as reports of brutal crimes committed against different ethnic groups have become rampant, leading to

further displacement in states such as Gedaref, Aj Jazirah, and South Darfur (VOA 24/09/2023, UNHCR 22/11/2023, ACLED 17/11/2023, OCHA 14/12/2023, IOM 29/12/2023)”

(Source: USAID – [Sudan Crisis: Shelter Thematic Report](#), 31 January 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to a report of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, all IDPs within River Nile state, Northern state, and White Nile state have reportedly arrived from Khartoum state and most of them are seeking shelter with relatives in the host community.

(Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) – [In Sudan, 10 years of displacements in 10 weeks](#), 12 July 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

5.2. Health

Are there reports on the accessibility and quality of basic and specialist health care for children?

The ongoing conflict in Sudan has had a devastating impact on the country’s health services. The conflict has led to the destruction of specialised health facilities, shortages of medical supplies and skilled health workers, and disruption of public health programs. The COI below indicates that children in Sudan lack access to basic quality health services due to the ongoing conflict. This has created numerous barriers to children’s access to essential medication such as insulin, immunisations, nutrition, protection from unwanted pregnancy and the lack of necessary psychological and overall medical support.

The authors of this article *“The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy”*, published in the BioMed Central, noted that:

“The ongoing conflict in Sudan is jeopardizing the work of important medical institutions like the Sudanese Childhood Diabetes Association, as healthcare facilities are being targeted and essential medicines, such as insulin, are being damaged or depleted.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Aborode AT, Fasawe AS, Agwuna FO, Badri R, Adewunmi RO. The critical state of children’s health during the Sudan crisis. *Lancet Child Adolescent Health*. 2023;7(8):526–8.

(Source: Badri and Dawood *Conflict and Health* (2024) 18:22 – [The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy](#), 17 March 2024, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information regarding healthcare services available to displaced children in Sudan:

“I remember we worked on reports about mental health services in Khartoum, and there were problems before the war, most of the hospitals and the medical staff that worked in this field were centred in Khartoum, which was the first spot that was hit and looted. I am sure that from an operational point of view this field has been disabled up to 90% throughout Sudan. All the hospitals that worked in the field of mental health are now occupied or have been looted, and the medical teams were already few, most of them migrated to Gulf countries with better job offers and salaries, which leads to a catastrophe. And sadly it is not discussed/acknowledged as it should be, despite the fact that during wars, people need to look into the psychological, therapeutic aspect of their wellbeing and awareness, this is a very important point that requires a whole portfolio in and of itself, in my opinion.

[...] There used to be organisations, some governmental, others support externally, in Khartoum there were known places, but they were known to be simple and with little resources, so now they are probably destroyed or barely functional. Even for example in Qadarif or Port Sudan there are some, they are very simple, because most of them were in Khartoum and they did not fill the need.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

Quoting OCHA, the UK Home Office reports that:

“[...]An increasing number of children and parents need mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Meanwhile, 80 metric tonnes (MT) of emergency medical supplies, including 59MT of IV fluids, 8MT trauma kits and around 12MT of kits for treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM), are in Port Sudan awaiting customs clearance, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and a further 3MT of medical supplies—including trauma kits, inter-agency health kits, gloves and other supplies—are ready for shipment from WHO’s Logistics Hub in Dubai.”¹⁰⁶ (pg. 34)

¹⁰⁶ OCHA, ‘Sudan: Clashes between SAF and RSF- Flash Update No. 9’, 2 May 2023

“Healthcare facilities continue to be attacked and occupied by parties to the conflict. In Khartoum, fewer than one-fifth of health facilities remain fully functional, and 60 per cent are not functioning at all, according to WHO ... In West Darfur’s Ag Geneina town, the building of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) was reportedly burned down on 6 May. Ag Geneina Teaching Hospital, the major referral hospital in the state, has been directly affected by fighting and parts of the hospital have been looted, according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).” (pg. 35)

(Source: UK Home office – [Country policy and information note: Security situation, Sudan](#), June 2023, pp. 34-35, para 11.2.2 – 11.2.3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this Thematic Report on Sudan, ACAPS highlights significant challenges in child health and immunisation, exacerbated by ongoing conflict:

“In 2021, mortality of under-fives stood at 56 per 1,000 live births (compared to global rates of 39/1,000 live births), and the neonatal mortality rate was 29 per 1,000 live births (UNICEF accessed 25/04/2023; WHO accessed 25/04/2023). Before the conflict, not all children had access to lifesaving vaccines. The 2021 Expanded Programme on Immunization coverage indicated that 84% of children under one year of age (1,313,458) received their third dose of pentavalent vaccine, and 82% of children (1,281,745) received their first dose of measles, while only 64% received their second dose (UNICEF accessed 25/04/2023; UNICEF 12/2021). A continuation of the conflict will likely result in fewer children having access to vaccines and higher vulnerability to disease.”

(Source: ACAPS – [Sudan: Update on the humanitarian situation with a focus on the impact on healthcare \(Thematic Report\)](#), 27 April 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports on the accessibility and quality of healthcare services (physical and psychological recovery, and social reintegration) to child survivors of rape in specific?³⁶

The lack of adequate and accessible services for survivors of rape in Sudan is documented by this report by the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, which states that:

“According to our information, there have been 7 documented cases of suicide resulting from unwanted pregnancy. These cases have occurred in Khartoum, Al-Gezira, and Sennar, highlighting the severe risks associated with unwanted pregnancy and the lack of necessary psychological and medical support.”

(Source: Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa(SIHA) – [The Aftermath of Rape: Unwanted Pregnancies and Abandoned Children](#), 25 April 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

This news article in the Guardian demonstrates how, with very little support from the healthcare system, female rape survivors in Sudan:

³⁶ This question emerged after the initial desk research was conducted.

“Gather twice a week in a nondescript house in Ardamata, on the outskirts of Geneina in Sudan’s West Darfur state, to tell their stories to each other, cry, and drink coffee.”

(Source: The Guardian – [Darfur rape survivors gather together after ethnically targeted campaign](#), 14 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In another news article, the Guardian reported:

“Rape survivors in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, are struggling to get hold of emergency contraception and abortion medication.

Access to a warehouse where 47,000 medical post-rape kits are stored has been cut off since the conflict began in April. Women are using social media to share information about where to find drugs to prevent pregnancies and infections – or are using herbal remedies.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which supplies the kits, said it could not say which forces, the Sudanese army or the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), were preventing access to the building.

[...]Enass Muzamel, an activist working with rape survivors in Khartoum, said access to post-rape care has become a “privilege”. “Everything is now happening through informal networks. Women are communicating through groups on social media, sharing resources and medication they happen to have,” she said.

“Many women are turning to traditional methods. They are making vaginal washes from herbs. One woman I know was raped by three men, she doesn’t know whether or not she’s pregnant. She was not able to access the right medication.”

Muzamel said she was contacted by the family of a 17-year-old whose home had been raided by RSF soldiers. “They found her sleeping and raped her. Eventually, we managed to find a local hospital doctor who still had medication and was able to visit the girl in her house, but it took us nine hours.”

Supplies of emergency contraception and abortion medication were scarce before the war, as abortion is not legal in the country, Muzamel added.

Some women who have fled the capital to safer areas have been able to access emergency contraception through the Sudan Family Planning Association, said Limiaa Khalfalla, the organisation’s programme director. The organisation has been offering health services in displacement camps via 11 mobile clinics, but is unable to say how many rape survivors they have offered support to.

Some Sudanese women are attempting to smuggle medication from abroad. One anonymous activist said they are preparing to cross the border with supplies. “I hope it will work,” they said. “But I have to be careful as it is a crime that could send me to prison for 10 years.”

(Source: The Guardian – [Anguish as rape survivors in Sudan unable to access vital medication](#), 14 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What is the most recent under-5-mortality rate? What is the rate in neighbouring countries?

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in Sudan:

“[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 21.6 deaths per 1000 live births from 47.3 [40.9- 55.7] in 1969 to 25.7 [16.7- 39.4] in 2022.”

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed on 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in Egypt:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 61.1 deaths per 1000 live births from 70.6 [59.7- 83.9] in 1957 to 9.48 [5.87- 15.2] in 2022."

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in Eritrea:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 28.9 deaths per 1000 live births from 45.8 [37.8- 56] in 1977 to 16.9 [8.89- 32.2] in 2022."

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in Ethiopia:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 40.3 deaths per 1000 live births from 67.5 [58.1- 79.4] in 1977 to 27.1 [20- 36.8] in 2022."

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in South Sudan:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 25.2 deaths per 1000 live births from 64.7 [44- 89.1] in 1989 to 39.4 [10.8- 109] in 2022."

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in the Central African Republic:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 27 deaths per 1000 live births from 58.7 [48.1- 72.6] in 1971 to 31.7 [22.4- 44.3] in 2022."

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in Chad:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 30.5 deaths per 1000 live births from 62.1 [50.4- 76.2] in 1973 to 31.6 [20- 49.4] in 2022."

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

According to the World Health Organization data, the most recent under-5 mortality rate in Libya:

"[...]the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has improved by ▼ 32.4 deaths per 1000 live births from 37.9 [30.4- 47.4] in 1972 to 5.47 [2.86- 10.2] in 2022"

(Source: World Health Organization 2024 data.who.int – [Neonatal mortality rate \(per 1000 live births\) \[Indicator\]](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

What is the number of hospitals/health centres in Sudan and what is the geographical distribution?

OCHA reported that:

“About 65 per cent of the population lack access to healthcare and between 70- 80 per cent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas are no longer functional.”

(Source: OCHA – [Nine months of conflict - Key Facts and Figures \(15 January 2024\)](#), 16 January 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this article published in May 2023, GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance reported that:

“Services have ceased in more than 70 percent of hospitals in areas hit by the clashes in a number of Sudanese states, Sudan’s doctors’ syndicate said Tuesday (25 April). In total, 13 of the hospitals were bombed, while 19 others forcibly evacuated.”

[...] The shortage of staff and medical supplies and constant power outages threaten to shut down the remaining functioning hospitals, while the number of victims of the ongoing clashes continues to rise, according to Atiya.[...]”

(Source: GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance – [Sudan conflict leaves health system in ‘total collapse’](#), 2 May 2023, 23 May 2024)

In this thematic report, ACAPS reported on the disruption of healthcare provision:

“[...]Health facilities have suspended their services because of their proximity to fighting to avoid putting patients’ and personnel’s lives at risk. The conflict has forced 70% (55 out of 79) of the hospitals in conflict-affected zones (Khartoum, North and South Kordofan, and West Darfur states) to shut down, leaving thousands of injured civilians without access to healthcare.”

(Source: ACAPS – [Sudan – Update on the humanitarian situation with a focus on the impact on healthcare](#), 27 April 2023)

Is information available on the number of active health workers and geographical distribution?

The authors of this article “The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy,” published in the BioMed Central, noted that:

“Killing, kidnapping, and assaulting doctors led to a huge shortage in staff in the few barely working facilities, as the remaining health workers were concerned regarding their safety.”

(Source: Badri and Dawood Conflict and Health – [The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy](#), (2024) 18:22, 17 March 2024, last accessed 2024)

In December 2023, the Voice of America reported that:

“There are no health facilities going to be operational,” the head of child protection at Save the Children International in Sudan, Osman Adam Abdelkarim, said. “There were two doctors killed in the last three days, and all of the medical staff evacuated, and left the place. And also, the supply chain to reach out[lying] areas, it was very challenging. It’s difficult to move, and that’s affecting the whole supply chain system for delivering drugs and also to make the medical staff available.”

(Source: Voice of America – [In Sudan, Health Care Crisis Looms for Unborn, Newborn as Conflict Escalates](#), 20 December 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this article “Protecting health in conflict in Sudan: a call for health worker solidarity”, published in the BMJ journal it was documented that:

“The violence against healthcare workers has taken many forms. There have been indiscriminate and targeted missile and artillery attacks against hospitals since the conflict renewed in April.² Facilities have been occupied, and soldiers have demanded priority treatment. Deliveries of supplies have been intercepted, and humanitarian aid has been redirected to the military, resulting in critical shortages of equipment and drugs. Numerous health workers have been violently attacked, with at least 21 deaths according to the latest statement released by the Preliminary Committee of the Sudan Medical Association.³ Health workers have been criticised and arrested, presumably for fulfilling their obligations to provide care to all people neutrally and advocating for peace.”

“[...]In Sudan, attacks on health are not a recent phenomenon; investigations by Physicians for Human Rights from 2019⁶ and 2020⁷ attest to the consistency of attacks on health in Sudan since the revolution began in late 2018. As a result, access to healthcare has become increasingly limited, exacerbating the suffering of 45 million people. Over 65% of hospitals in Khartoum are now shuttered or destroyed.⁸”

² Ibrahim A. Sudan doctors caught in fighting recount horrors at hospitals. Al Jazeera. 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/23/sudan-doctors-caught-in-fighting-recount-horrors-at-hospitals>

³ At least 19 medics dead in Sudan war. Dabanga News. 2023. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/at-least-19-medics-dead-in-sudan-war>

⁶ Haar R. Intimidation and persecution: Sudan's attacks on peaceful protesters and physicians. Physicians for Human Rights, 2019. <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/intimidation-and-persecution-sudans-attacks-on-peaceful-protesters-and-physicians/> Google Scholar

⁷ Fricke A. “Chaos and Fire”: an analysis of Sudan's June 3, 2019 Khartoum Massacre. Physicians for Human Rights. 2020 <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/chaos-and-fire-an-analysis-of-sudans-june-3-2019-khartoum-massacre/> Google Scholar

⁸ Sudanese American Physicians Association. 2023. <https://sapa-usa.org/> Google Scholar

(Source: The BMJ Journal – [Protecting health in conflict in Sudan: a call for health worker solidarity](#), 27th June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do disabled children receive special attention, assistance and care, in order to let them lead a life as self-reliant as possible and where they can participate actively in the community?

In a news article, published in February 2024, Sky News reported on the journey of disabled civilians and orphaned children fleeing violence in Sudan:

[...]“This difficult trek was endured by hundreds of vulnerable disabled civilians and orphaned children searching for some semblance of safety in Sudan's eastern state.

One infant orphan died on the road and another died soon after arrival, their small sick bodies battered by the 24-hour passage and the violent conditions of their departure point.

But many more died in the besieged cities they narrowly escaped.

[...]

In Khartoum's well-known al Maygoma orphanage, 69 children died from illness resulting from the war-time conditions.

Like nearly half a million others, the orphans were evacuated almost four hours away to Wad Madani in a joint effort by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNICEF and government authorities.

The country's second-largest city became a growing humanitarian hub and treatment centre for the sick, elderly and disabled.

But on 18 December, the RSF captured Wad Madani and testimonies of terror, looting and murder echoed out of the former safe haven.

The hundreds of orphans, alongside adults and children with disabilities, had no choice but to embark on the arduous journey to Kassala.

When we met them, there was a sense of unease. A severe lack of life-saving supplies and uncertainty over their long-term safety.

“Five of them have died since evacuation. One died on the way and one on arrival. They were both in need of surgery and were declared dead in the hospital,” says Dr Abeer Abdullah Zakaria, a medical caretaker at the orphanage.

“Three more of them have died at the orphanage since. They suffered from cerebral palsy and contracted blood poisoning from their bed sores.”

Aside from a few flimsy donated mattresses, the young children have no beds to lie on.

Outside the classrooms, more children from the care homes of al Hasahisa, a town near Wad Madani, sleep under tents on the hard playground.

Their delayed and tumultuous evacuation was a source of great controversy.

But across town in a shelter for displaced people with disabilities, [...]The parents tell us that they designed their houses around their children’s needs. Now, they are huddled in classrooms with strangers.

“You cannot even imagine having a child with severe autism and living in a displacement shelter and lacking basic necessities. They can’t just eat anything or stay in any room. They are struggling in every way,” says Nemat Hassabu Ali.

She fled her house in Bahri, Khartoum, with her two sons. Both have been diagnosed with severe autism and the sound of airstrikes and shelling was overwhelming for them.

She was hesitant to evacuate immediately over concerns that few would accept and accommodate her children.

They ended up leaving after running out of food.

Corpses littered the ground around their home as they escaped, she says. Her youngest son, Motaz, still obsessively draws the corpses he saw that day.

In Wad Madani, where they sought safety for weeks before the RSF advance, and now here in Kassala, her children continue to suffer in a crowded shelter that is far from their purpose-built home.”

(Source: Sky News – **‘They are struggling in every way’: The orphaned and disabled children forced to flee fighting in Sudan**, 21 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this press release published in May 2023, OHCHR commented that:

“We are alarmed that a shelter for girls with disabilities in Khartoum was shelled leading to the death of a girl and injuring another.”

(Source: OHCHR – **civilians bear devastating brunt of fighting in sudan: UN experts**, 11 May 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the ACAPS Thematic Report:

“...in 2008, 4.8% of the population (1,854,985 people) lived with disabilities (OHCHR 19/06/2020). This census also included information from the southern states, which then gained independence in 2011 as South Sudan (AICS

accessed 25/04/2023). Understanding of disability prevalence is likely outdated because of a lack of any recent disability data, and the civil war between the northern and southern states before South Sudan's independence in 2011 likely led to further long-term disabilities associated with injuries from fighting. The conflict and violence in 2023 will also likely increase the number of people with disabilities resulting from trauma, injuries, delayed access to healthcare, and other humanitarian needs (HRW 03/12/2018; HI 09/06/2022; GSDRC 08/2017). The disruption to healthcare services will also likely affect people with disabilities dependent on regular healthcare."

(Source: ACAPS – [Sudan: Update on the humanitarian situation with a focus on the impact on healthcare \(Thematic Report\)](#), 27 April 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

5.3. Education

Note that over the past year, due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan and displacement of millions (see [Introduction and context on page 17](#)) has severely impacted children's access to education, therefore we recommend users read this section in its entirety to understand the full current context.

What is the legal age to start with school? Up to what age does compulsory education apply?

According to Right to education:

"Minimum age for only one area (education/employment): Sudan– n.c.*/16"

(Source: Right to education – [Comparative table on minimum age legislation, at what age?](#) 2011, pg. 22, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is primary education free for all children? (in chronological order)

The Child Act (2010) states:

"Chapter V Child Education Child right to education

28. (1) Every Child shall have the right to general education.

(2) The State shall provide the capabilities for availing the chances of the compulsory basic education, free of charge.

(3) The State shall endeavour to provide education free of charge, at the government secondary schools, for orphans, and the disabled and those of unknown parents.

[...]"

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children's Act, 2010](#), pg. 18, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The right to education analysis argued that:

"Minimum age for the end of compulsory education: From 3rd and 4th reports combined:

204. "Article 22 of the 2005 Interim Constitution stipulates that primary and secondary schools and educational authorities fall under the competence of the states. Article 13 (1) (a) stipulates that the State shall ensure free and compulsory education at the primary level and in illiteracy eradication programmes.

226. "Although education is free and compulsory, the relevant decision is yet to be fully implemented.[...]

306. "The draft Children's Act stipulates that children must enjoy protection from physical, mental or moral exploitation and must not be denied education. According to this draft law the minimum age for paid work is 14

years and the minimum age for engaging a child in light work is 12 years. This covers employment that does not put the child's health and development at risk, and does not affect his school attendance and education."

(Source: Right to education – [Comparative table on minimum age legislation, at what age?](#), pp. 79-80, 2011, last accessed 23 May 2024)

These US DOS, and the UK Home Office reports on additional challenges in accessing education in Sudan:

"Education: The law provides for tuition-free basic education up to grade eight, but students often had to pay school, uniform, and examination fees to attend. Primary education was neither compulsory nor universal. Failure to present a valid birth certificate precludes enrollment in school."

(Source: US DOS – [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

"[...] Education for example is divided in public and private education. Private education is better, but very expensive. The public education is very poor. Only a small amount of money has to be paid but even then, sometimes parents cannot fulfill this, which forced children to engage in child labor like shoe shining. According to NMP, the lack of truly affordable education often drives children into child labour." (para. 7.3.6)

(Source: UK Home Office – [Country policy and information note Sudan: Non arab darfuris](#), October 2021, pg. 45, para 7.3.5 - 7.3.6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is data available on the state budget for education?

In a research article "*A Qualitative Evidence Synthesis of the K-12 Education Policy Making in Sudan and the Need for Reforms*", the authors commented that:

"[...] Investing in education is not a priority for the policy makers in Sudan. For example, the government announced in 2012 that there would be an increase to the education expenditure from 2.7% to 8% of GDP and 20% from the total government budget (FMGE, 2012a). Such statements are not implemented yet. Another example is that of the Sudanese budget for 2017 which shows that the government allocated about 123.6 million US dollars for the entire education sector, accounting for less than 1% from the total budget which was identified as 12.5 billion US dollars (Sudanese Ministry of Finance Report [SMFR], 2017). However, based on the above figures, it is obvious that the poor funding of education in Sudan has over time deprived a lot of Sudanese children an access to education."

(Source: Alnuaman Alamin, Abdulghani Muthanna, and Ahmed Alduais on Journals Sage – [A Qualitative Evidence Synthesis of the K-12 Education Policy Making in Sudan and the Need for Reforms](#), 25 January 2022, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to its UNICEF Thematic reports on Sudan education, it states:

The 2018 government education expenditure is not yet available but in 2017 the Government of Sudan spent 1.2 per cent of GDP on education and about 11.2 per cent on public expenditure⁶. This low investment placed a lot of burden on families who contributed twice as much to the education of their daughters and sons. UNICEF continued to raise awareness among senior government officials of the need for increased budgetary allocations to education.

"Low government expenditure in education (Sudan spent 1.3 percent of its gross domestic product and about 11 percent of its total public expenditure on education) resulting in an inadequate number of schools, shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate facilities in schools such as separate toilets for boys and girls, drinking water, school fencing and learners' desks, affecting adversely both access and retention."

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan education – Global thematic report January – December 2018](#), March 2019, pg. 9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How many schools are in Sudan and what is the geographical distribution?

UNHCR in its Protection briefing covering September 2023, reported that:

“[...] According to the Sudan Site Management Sector, at least 82% of the currently mapped 526 gathering sites are schools (in Al Jazirah, Kassala, Gedaref, White Nile, Red Sea and Northern States).

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan | Protection Brief – September 2023](#), 10 October 2023, pg. 7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this Press Release, UNICEF reported that:

“PORT-SUDAN, 9 October 2023 – An estimated 19 million children in Sudan are out of school as the brutal conflict approaches the six-month mark next week.

Out of this total – or 1 in every 3 children in the country- some 6.5 million lost access to school due to increased violence and insecurity in their region, with at least 10,400 schools shuttered in conflict-affected areas. Meanwhile, over 5.5 million children who reside in areas less impacted by war are waiting for local authorities to confirm whether classrooms can be reopened. [...]”

(Source: UNICEF Sudan – [19 million children in Sudan out of school as conflict rages on – UNICEF, Save the Children](#), 9 October 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What are the enrolment rates, disaggregated by gender, age and regions? What is the completion rate?

Between 2017 and 2023, the UN Population Fund published the following enrolment rates:

Total net enrolment rate, primary education, percent, 2017-2023:	66
Total net enrolment rate, lower secondary education, percent, 2017-2023:	70
Total net enrolment rate, upper secondary education, percent, 2017-2023:	51
Gender parity index, total net enrolment rate, primary education, 2017-2023:	0.9
Gender parity index, total net enrolment rate, lower secondary education, 2017-2023:	1
Gender parity index, total net enrolment rate, upper secondary education, 2017-2023:	1.1

(Source: UN Population Fund: [Education – World Population Dashboard Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the UNICEF in this joint statement with Save the Children reported that:

“Approximately 6.9 million girls and boys, one in three school-aged children, do not go to school in Sudan, and a further 12 million will have their school years heavily interrupted by a lack of sufficient teachers, infrastructure, and an enabling learning environment to make them reach their full potential.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Joint Statement: Urgent action needed as 6.9 million children are out-of-school and 12 million face learning disruptions](#), 12 September 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Norwegian Country of Origin Information highlighted that:

“According to MICS 2014 (p. 215), the prevalence of FGM among women aged 15-49 is somewhat higher in the upper socio-economic strata (over 90%) than in the lower social strata (about 85%). The same dynamics are observed at

educational level, as the prevalence is higher among women with some form of education (over 90%) than those with no education at all (77%).”

(Source: The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre Landinfo – [Report Sudan Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#), 26 August 2021, pg. 13, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Sida’s 2011 country case study on Sudan, highlights significant educational disparities between urban and rural areas in Sudan:

“[...] There are great gaps between urban and rural areas, and the enrollment of girls is low in regions with high poverty. This disparity is related to the girls’ family duties at home. In some areas it is the girl child’s responsibility to fetch water, which is a time consuming and at times a dangerous activity (landmines, rape, etc.). Also, early marriages among some groups in Sudan cause girls to drop out of school. A birth certificate is a requirement for school admission (SCS, 2006). This requirement means that refu-gee children in effect are denied education. The registration of births is generally low, according to the Secretary General of the NCCW.³⁸ The registration rate is about 40 per cent despite its statutory require-ment in terms of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1992.”

(Source: Sida – [Sudan Country Case Study: Child Rights, Sida and Samia al-Nagar](#), Liv Tonnesen, Mrahc 2011, pg. 11, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Based on UNICEF data, the completion rates in Sudan are:

Child-related SDG indicators	Value	Latest year with data
4.1.2 Completion rate in primary education (%)	73	2019
4.1.2 Completion rate in lower secondary education (%)	48	2019
4.1.2 Completion rate in upper secondary education (%)	29	2019 ³⁹
Sudan	Female	15-19

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022 via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#), last accessed 29 September 2023)

Are educational facilities available and accessible, in all parts of Sudan?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared that:

“[...] one of the key issues is the denial [of] education [...]. So all the schools have been closed since April 23rd or mid-April, [...]and that’s why many families[...] start moving out to enable children [to] access[...] education. They move to Egypt, they move also to Uganda[...].”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained the current context:

³⁸ The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) is part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, and at state-level falls under the responsibility of the Wali (Governor).

³⁹ For readability, Asylos has sourced this data from the UN data website and presented it in this table.

“So the country is at war and all governance institutions have been shattered and are currently non-functioning or barely functioning. Since the destruction of the capital, you have basically a de facto government in exile in Port Sudan that has not succeeded in re-establishing levels of governance. I think one of the strongest example[s] is education. And since the beginning of the war – so it’s been now 10 months in a week – all schools, all classes have been shut down, so there’s been no back to school in September, and it has been cancelled. None of the teachers have been paid since March. So you have an entire generation and a large number of children that – I mean, basically, all children right now in Sudan are currently out of school.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared that:

“The biggest problem facing children is education for sure. About 19 million children are out of schools now. Education is almost at a halt, even schools in Egypt aren’t able to progress because they follow the Sudanese curriculum. Some families in Egypt had to move their children to Egyptian schools because of this problem. The problem is that if they are in advanced grades, like 6th or 7th, it’s not simple to be transferred to the Egyptian curriculum. There is a real problem in regards to education. UNICEF tried in some areas like the north of Sudan and Halfa, to establish educational centres, and utilise electronic devices to assist the learning process but they are simple attempts that don’t respond to the gravity of the need, it doesn’t even cover 1% of the children. This is the real catastrophe.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

Regarding Educational facilities in Sudan, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) reported that:

“Regarding the situation in Khartoum, International Crisis Group wrote in a report from 22 June 2023 that ‘[t]he city has practically ceased functioning, with almost no service provision for the millions who remain trapped there’, and noted the lack of food and water, as well as nonfunctional hospitals, schools, banks, and businesses.”

(Source: EUAA – [Security and political developments in Sudan, particularly in the Khartoum state, including civilian impacts](#), 15 April 2023 to 10 August 2023, pg. 8, last accessed 23 May 2024)

While reports from Education International⁴⁰ reported on the disruption of access to education due to the ongoing conflict:

“The ongoing fighting in Sudan has resulted in restricted movement and disrupted access to education, which is crucial for the country’s stability and development.

[...]Eighty-eight students and workers of the University of Khartoum were trapped for four days in the university premises without food or water due to heavy firefights. One student was killed after being hit by a stray bullet. At least one other was wounded. There were eventually evacuated by the SAF on 18 April.”

(Source: Education International – [Sudan – Education International calls for the protection of students, teachers and education facilities](#), 19 April 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do all children, e.g. girls and boys, rural/urban, children from minorities, children with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, unaccompanied and separated children, internally displaced people (IDP) children and children in detention, have equal access to education under law and in practice? Are special education programs for weaker students available?

⁴⁰ Taken from Education International’s own website: Education International is the Global Union Federation that brings together organisations of teachers and other education employees from across the world. Through our 383 member organisations, we represent more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories.

According to a UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children brief, published in 2023:

“Nearly 7 million school-age children (one in three) are out of school, and the remaining 12 million (6.2 million girls and 5.8 million boys) struggle to learn due to inadequate learning spaces and supplies, insufficient teacher capacity and pay and lack of other support, including for disabled children. Of those in school, 7 out of 10 cannot read and understand a simple sentence.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Humanitarian Action for Children](#), 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

US DOS in its 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan, stated that:

“Institutionalized Children:

Police typically sent homeless children who had committed crimes to government camps for indefinite periods. Health care, schooling, and living conditions were generally very basic in these camps.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

Social stigma and lack of official support often prevented government and private entities from accommodating persons with disabilities in education and employment. Appropriate support remained especially rare in rural areas.”

(Source: US DOS – [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UK Home Office, reported in its Country Policy and Information note on Sudan: Non Arab Darfuris in 2021 that:

“People from the so-called marginalised areas including the South Kordofan, Darfur and the Blue Nile regions who resettled in urban cities in Khartoum and elsewhere across Sudan suffer exclusion from economic opportunities and lack of services. IDPs and members from these communities who settled in Khartoum for instance, exclusively live in ghettos and poor neighbourhoods in the city’s peripheries in areas such as Mayo, Al-Haj Yousif, Dar al-Salam and others. These areas are characterised by lack of basic services in education, health care and rundown conditions.”

(Source: UK Home Office – [Country policy and information note Sudan: Non arab darfuris](#), October 2021, pg. 43, para 7.3.4, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are all teachers qualified by training?

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 commented that:

“[...]None of the teachers have been paid since March.[...]”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

OCHA reported in its Sudan Humanitarian Update, July 2023:

“[...]Education Cluster: To ensure that teachers are able to support children affected by conflict and to improve the quality of learning over time, thus building the resilience of the education system to future shocks, the Education Cluster provided training to 500 primary school teachers in May 2023 in Aj Jazirah and White Nile states. The training focused on Teachers in Crises Context (TiCC) with some components of the Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) Better Learning Program (BLP) and the Child Education Pathways Emergency Curriculum. In addition, 80 teachers (48 women and 32 men) in North Kordofan received training in leadership and pedagogy skills in an emergency setup in June 2023.”

(Source: OCHA – [SUDAN Humanitarian Update](#), 28 July 2023, pg. 3 last accessed 23 May 2024)

In an Al Jazeera news article dated 13 October 2022, it was reported that:

“[...] a lack of qualified teachers are some of the reasons why children are missing out.”

(Source: Al Jazeera – [How are children faring in crisis-hit Sudan?](#), 13 October 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What is the teacher/student ratio?

In this thematic report, UNICEF highlights several critical issues regarding the education system in Sudan, specifically related to the shortage and quality of teachers:

“There is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in Sudan with just over a quarter of teachers in primary schools meeting the minimum requirement for teaching. Moreover, the curricula followed in education studies give priority to theory but remain weak in providing practical and pedagogical skills for instruction. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive national strategies for the certification and training of pre-service and in-service teachers within state schools in Sudan. In many cases, teachers are recruited without any formal qualifications and only a secondary school certificate; others may have a university degree but receive no training on teaching practice and often teach a subject different to their specialisation. Once in the classroom, most teachers receive little formal training throughout their careers. (pg. 9)

The shortage of teachers is worse in rural areas with a Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 50.8 in rural schools and 34.9 in urban schools. There are some inefficiencies in the education system regarding teacher deployment where teachers are not deployed based on demand. The inadequate availability of teachers in rural schools puts additional pressure on poor families to pay for volunteer teachers to improve the learning process.” (pp. 9-10)

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan education – Global thematic report January – December 2018](#), March 2019, pp. 9-10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there a form of informal education, outside the formal education systems?

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided the following overview of the education systems in Sudan:

“The schools [have] been shut down since the beginning of the war. So currently, unless humanitarian organisations. Like ours, for example, creates a small, temporary program for learners and so on in temporary learning centres. They will not have access to education. And even the offer that is given from the humanitarian community, it’s temporary and doesn’t replace any formal education. So at the moment, no children in Sudan [have] access to education. I would put a caveat, actually, for the Ethiopian refugees in the camps because we’ve been able to maintain some type of education services to them as NRC, in a more it was a program that we were running before the war, and we were able to maintain that, actually, throughout. That would be the only exception.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In this Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO reported that:

“2.3 Other types of schools

Unregistered/Unrecognised schools

Religious schools known as *khalwas* are typically unregistered, Islamic boarding schools provide supplemental education and schooling to young children. There are approximately 30,000 such schools in the country, and they typically receive funding from private donors as well as the government.

Alternative learning programmes

UNICEF supported “integrated education and child protection activities” in one of the alternative learning programme (ALP) centres in Kassala. These programmes are managed by a community-based enterprise that is predominantly run by UNICEF Sudan with funding from the German government. These programmes have helped to increase the enrollment of out-of-school children.

Schools in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) / Refugee Camps

Sudan hosts approximately 20 refugee and IDP camps. Many of the camp schools are comprised of makeshift classrooms, run by volunteer refugee/IDP teachers. Facilities can be supported by UN agencies such as UNICEF, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other aid groups to varying degrees. Many of these schools charge fees. In this regard, the project on the Integration and Mainstreaming of Refugee Children into the Sudanese Education System (IRCSES) in South Darfur and South Kordofan, run by UNICEF in partnership with the European Union (EU), aims “to support the integration of refugee children into Sudan’s national education system”.

(Source: UNESCO – [Sudan Non-state actors in education](#), November 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the UNESCO, and the Guardian newspaper, reported on the various informal education system in Sudan:

“2.3.8. Supplementary education: Other kinds of education are provided, such as adolescents’ education, special education and Islamic education. In 2008/09, it was reported that 1,450 students attended Islamic secondary education, about 14,000 were enrolled in adolescents’ education and some 40,000 attended special education.”

(Source: UNESCO – [Sudan – education policy review; paving the road to 2030](#), pg. 26, para 2.3.8, March 2018, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children protected from corporal punishment in schools?

End Corporal Punishment and Save the children NGOs, forerunners of Child’s rights in Sudan reported that:

“Sudan has undertaken law reform to prohibit corporal punishment in schools, day care and penal institutions. In November 2020, pursuant to article 29(2) of the Child Act 2010, the Ministry of Education signed a Regulation on behaviour control in educational institutions (unofficial translation) to prohibit corporal punishment in all schools. Educational institutions are defined as preschool (including day care), basic, secondary schools, Quranic schools as well as industrial education centres, agricultural schools, adult education and special needs schools. The Regulation includes a list of positive discipline methods (chapter 5) and provides for sanctions (chapter 6). Civil society and partners are now mobilizing to implement the Regulation which will include teachers’ training on positive discipline. Sudan also enacted the Miscellaneous Amendments Law 2020 which amends the Criminal Code 1991 to repeal whipping and flogging by way of discipline and as a sentence for crime. The new law replaces whipping with probation and community service (article 47(b)).”

(Source: End Corporal Punishment – [Sudan prohibits corporal punishment in schools, day care and penal institutions](#), 9th February 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

“Corporal punishment in Sudan is widespread and common in schools. This behavior is practiced by schoolteachers for educational purposes. SCI indicates that the main obstacle to ending corporal punishment lies in the lack of awareness of teachers, parents, and children themselves about the rights of children and the alternatives to punishment. Therefore, SCI works closely with the national and international human and child rights organizations to address the key recommendations to schools’ administrations and the Sudanese government- notably the Ministry of Education.”

(Source: Save the Children – [Save the children and journalists for children welcome the decision of passing the regulation list to roll out banning of corporal punishment in educational institutions](#), 22 November, 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Guardian newspaper in a news article published in October 2020, reported on abuses inside schools:

“I began investigating after allegations emerged of abuse inside some of these schools: children kept in chains, beaten and sexually abused. Khalwas have existed in Sudan for centuries. There are more than 30,000 of them across the country where children are taught to memorise the Qur’an. They are run by sheikhs who usually provide food, drink and shelter, free of charge. As a result, poor families often send their children to khalwas instead of public schools.”

(Source: The Guardian Newspaper – [Revealed- chaining, beatings and torture inside Sudan’s Islamic schools](#), 19 October, 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

6. Demographic information / statistical data on children in Sudan

It’s important to note, that the current conflict in Sudan has likely affected the demographic information of children due to the internal displacement of millions of people.

6.1. Total number of children disaggregated by age, gender, and percentages in relation to the total population

What is the total number of children in Sudan?

According to UNICEF, the total number of individuals aged 0-19 is:

“19,583,334.”

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022, via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#), last accessed 24 May 2024)

What percentage of the total population do children represent?

According to UNICEF, the total number of individuals aged 0-19, 19,583,334, represents 50.82 % of the total population, which according to a 2023 projection is 48,109,006.

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022 via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#) – last accessed 23 May 2024)

How does this percentage differ between regions?

Region	% ⁴¹
Blue Nile	42%
White Nile	32%
South Kordofan	36%
North Kordofan	42%
West Kordofan	51%
East Darfur	+50%
West Darfur	42%
Central Darfur	62%
South Darfur	47%
North Darfur	45%
Kassala	45%
Red Sea	N/K
Gedarif	N/K
Northern	N/K
River Nile	N/K
Khartoum	N/K
El Gazira	N/K
Sennar	N/K ⁴²

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profiles](#), 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How many children fall into each age group (e.g., 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19)?

According to UNICEF, this is the breakdown:

0-4:	7,289,083	(3,702,763 male)	(3,586,320 female)
5-9:	6,540,732	(3,313,804 male)	3,226,928 female)
10-14:	5,753,519	(2,909,238 male)	(2,844,281 female)
15-19:	4,866,651	(2,456,533 male)	(2,410,118 female)

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022 via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

What percentage of children fall into each age group?

Based on UNICEF data, the percentage of children in each age group against the overall population 0-19 is the following:

0-4:	29.81%
5-9:	26.75%
10-14:	23.53%
15-19:	19.9%

⁴¹ For readability, Asylos has (Sourced this data from the UNICEF website and presented it in this table. N/K stands for ‘unknown’

⁴² N/K means unknown

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022 via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there gender disparities in the number of children across different age groups?

Based on UNICEF data, the gender disparity in each age group is the following:

0-4:	3% less females
5-9:	3% less females
10-14:	2% less females
15-19:	2% less females

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022 via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

How does the distribution of children vary by region? And are there regions where the number of children is significantly higher or lower? Additionally, is there a correlation between urban/rural settings and the number of children?

The UNICEF State Profiles contain data about the number of children in the individual states of Sudan. No state profile has been published for the following states: Northern, River Nile, Khartoum, El Gazira, and Sennar. The Red Sea State Profile contains no data on children population. For Gedarif State only the number of adolescents (aged 14-19) is reported. South Kordofan: “The population of South Kordofan is almost 2 million people [...] The number of children is 714,200, of which 295,460 children are under-five (Population Projection, 2018). There are 100,362 young people (aged between 18 and 24 years) in South Kordofan state.”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – South Kordofan](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

North Kordofan: “The population of North Kordofan state is slightly more than 2,577,044 million people. Twenty (20) per cent of the population live in urban, 67 per cent in rural, and 13 per cent in nomadic settings. There are 1.1 million children (aged 0-15) in North Kordofan, and 631,696 youth (aged 18-24).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – North Kordofan](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

West Kordofan: “The state has a population of 1,945,450 people (2014 census), of which 984,969 children (aged 0-18).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – West Kordofan](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

East Darfur: “The state population is now estimated at 1.7 million, with more than half being children (aged 0 to 18).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – East Darfur](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

West Darfur: “West Darfur has a little over 1.8 million inhabitants. [...] There are 755,700 children (aged 0-18) in West Darfur, and 215,934 youth (aged 18-24).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – West Darfur](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Central Darfur: “The population of Central Darfur state is slightly more than 1.6 million people. [...] There are around one million children (aged 0-18) in Central Darfur, and around 350,000 youth (aged 18-24).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Central Darfur](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

South Darfur: “The population of South Darfur state is slightly more than 3.6 million people [...] There are 1.7 million children (aged 0-18) and 631,696 youth (aged 18-24) in South Darfur.”

(Source: UNICEF, [State Profile – South Darfur](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

North Darfur: “The population of North Darfur state is 2,827,155 people (1,392,545 women and 1,434,610 men). There are 1.3 million children (aged 0-18) in North Darfur, and 631,696 youth (aged 18-24).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – North Darfur](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Blue Nile: “The population of Blue Nile state is slightly more than 1.3 million people, including many internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are 550,000 children (aged 0-18) in the Blue Nile, the average family size is five and the average population density is 21 people per square kilometer. With more than half of the population being below 24 years of age, Blue Nile is one of the youngest states in Sudan.”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Blue Nile](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

White Nile: “The population of White Nile state is slightly more than 2.9 million people. There are approximately 950,000 children (aged 0-18) in White Nile, the average family size is five and the average population density is 35 people per square kilometer. Three-quarters of the population lives in rural areas.”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – White Nile](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Gedaref: “The population of Gedaref state is 2.5 million people, with an annual growth of about five (5) per cent. The average household size is 5.5 people. There are 279,181 adolescents (aged 14-19).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Gedaref](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Kassala: “Kassala’s state has 2.8 million inhabitants, and the annual population growth rate is about 2.8 per cent. The average household size has 5.5 people. There are 1,271,780 children (aged 0-18) and 25,338 youth (aged 19-24).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Kassala](#), pg. 2, 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the above data published in the UNICEF State Profiles, most states have a children population – in some cases defined as the 0-18 age group, in some others as the 0-19 age group – between 42 % and “more than half” (East Darfur) of the overall population. Three states are clear outliers: White Nile (32 %) and South Kordofan (36 %) on the lower end, and Central Darfur (62%) on the upper end.

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profiles](#), 9 May 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided background information on the context of Darfur:

“If we’re looking at Darfur, and this is true, I think, for most of Sudan, certainly where there are serious differences in how people make a living. In Darfur, before the genocide began in 2003, it was estimated that-- let’s recall that there is no [current] census. There never has been, and that intermarriage is common, that populations of different ethnic groups tend to mingle more in urban settings. But if we’re talking about the vast majority of Darfur, we’re talking about a population that was roughly two-thirds non-Arab, African, and one-third Arab. The Arab population was primarily nomadic pastoralists, herding camels, cattle, [and] other livestock. And having many children was desirable, but not so much as it was for people who were sedentary agriculturalists, the non-Arab-African populations. They would have children for labour of a sort that was not required by nomadic pastoralists. Again, in the absence of a real census, which has never been taken in Darfur, we have only estimates. The pre-war estimates I have seen had the total population of Darfur ranging from 5 million to 7.5 million. That’s a very, very large disparity. I think the consensus among a wide range of sources would be 6 million to 6.5 million pre-war. My own research on mortality⁴³ suggests that as many as— well, over half a million people have been killed directly or indirectly from the violence perpetrated by the Janjaweed and subsequently by the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces as well. So there would be some disparity, but it’s not quantifiable, the difference in family size. And it’s changed also because so many children who might be able to earn a living abroad are leaving Darfur if they possibly can. There’s no employment in camps. Some children of working age can work in El Fasher, in the case of Zamzam or Nyala before

⁴³ Sudan Research, Analysis and Advocacy by Eric Reeves: QUANTIFYING GENOCIDE: [Darfur Mortality Update](#), August 6, 2010 (updated November 2016)

it was taken over by the RSF from Kalma Camp and Otash Camp. So we're really lacking in demographic data. It's a huge gap."

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

What percentage of the population aged 0-18 are enrolled in educational institutions?

Due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan and the displacement of millions, which has forced millions of children out of school, updated information on education enrollment is severely limited. Below, UN Data published the following data on the gross enrollment ratios for primary and secondary education in Sudan for the years 2013 and 2014:

"[...]Education: Primary gross enrollment ratio (f/m per 100 pop.) 2014 66.7/74.1 2013
Education: Secondary gross enrollment ratio (f/m per 100 pop.) 2014 41.5/43.9 2013"

(Source: UN Data – [Sudan](#), no date available, last accessed 4 October 2023)

Is there a gender imbalance among children, and how does this relate to the total population?

Based on UNICEF data, there is an imbalance: the total number of the male population aged 0-19 is 12,382,338, while the female population in the same age group is 12,067,647. This makes a difference of approximately 3%.

(Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022 via UNICEF – [Child-related SDG indicators](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

6.2. Existence of ethnic, religious, linguistic minorities or indigenous groups and number of children belonging to these groups

See also [4.2.1. Non-discrimination \(including children of minorities and indigenous people\)](#) on page 67

What minority and indigenous groups exist within the Sudanese population?

According to The World Factbook, which is produced by the U.S Government's Central Intelligence Agency(CIA), stated that the following ethnic groups exist in Sudan:

"Sudanese Arab (approximately 70%), Fur, Beja, Nuba, Ingessana, Uduk, Fallata, Masalit, Dajo, Gimir, Tunjur, Berti; there are over 500 ethnic groups"

(Source: US Government – [The World Factbook, Sudan](#), page last updated 27 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The 2020 Annual Report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom focuses on Sudan, details its religious demographics and the state of religious freedom:

"Background

The population of Sudan is estimated at more than 43 million people; Pew Research estimates that 90.7 percent of the population is Muslim; 5.4 percent is Christian; and the remaining groups include Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'is, followers of indigenous religions, and others. Although the Interim National Constitution of 2005 enshrined the freedom of religion or belief, it affixed Islam—according to a narrow, Islamist interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence—as the source of law and, in practice, the former regime consistently and egregiously violated religious freedom. It

systematically oppressed religious minorities, including some Christian groups whose churches, businesses, and other properties it targeted for confiscation and demolition, and whose leadership it systematically harassed and arrested. At the same time, minority-Muslim groups, such as the Republican Party, Shi'a Muslims, and Quranists, also faced ongoing persecution. The National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) often perpetrated these violations, and its personnel closely monitored the activities of religious leaders. In addition to such repression and persecution, the former regime also directed particular disdain, neglect, and violence to peripheral areas of the country, such as Darfur and the “Two Areas” of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The regime’s antagonism toward those regions resulted in massive underdevelopment, severe repression of traditional religious communities and ethnic minorities, and a series of brutal civil conflicts that remained unresolved at the time of al-Bashir’s deposition in April 2019.”

(Source: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom – [2020 Annual Report Sudan Chapter](#), 2020, pg. 81, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to this article published by WorldAtlas, the following languages are spoken in Sudan:

“Sudan has two official languages namely literary Arabic and English. The number of languages indigenous to Sudan is estimated at 114 while there are over 500 accents in the country.

Arabic, [...]Beja[...], Hausa[...]

The Nilo-Saharan family has the largest number of native languages in Sudan. This group of languages is spread from the south up to the southern parts of Khartoum.

Dinka[...], Nuer

Other Nilo-Saharan Languages Of Sudan. The Fur languages are used by the Fur people of Darfur inhabiting western Sudan as well as Chad. The Masalit language is native to Sudan where it is used by the Masalit people occupying West Darfur. The Zaghawa language is heard among the Zaghawa communities of northwestern Sudan. The Temein languages constitute some Eastern Sudanic languages such as Tese, Temein, and Doni spoken in Sudan.

Nubian Languages Spoken In Sudan

The Nubian languages are spoken in Nubian communities living in Sudan. The Nobiin language has the most speakers in this family, and it is commonly used in northern Sudan. Most of the nobiin-speaking people also speak Sudanese Arabic. Another Nubian language in Sudan is the Midob language used by the Midob communities who have settled in North Darfur. Midob people are also found in Jezirat Aba as well as the Khartoum area. The Hill Nubian languages have about 63,000 speakers in the northern Nuba Mountains situated in the southern part of Sudan. Seven Hill Nubian languages have been identified, some of which have dialects. The Birgid language is now ranked as an extinct language.

[...]The Zande language is mostly used in western Sudan being spoken by the Zande communities [...]. The Kordofanian languages constitute six language families used in the Nuba Mountains of the Kurdufan region of Sudan. Languages classified in this group include the Kadu, Rashad, Talodi-Heiban, Katla, and Lafofa. The Fulani language has speakers in Kordofan, northern areas, and in the Blue Nile region.”

(Source: WorldAtlas – [What Languages Are Spoken In Sudan?](#), 1 August 2017, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In 2010, New York-based non-profit 24 Hours for Darfur published Darfurian Voices, a research project which documented the views held by Darfurian refugees in Chad, and provides some background information on the following seven ethnic groups in Darfur:

“FUR [...] The Fur are Darfur’s largest ethnic group, representing around one-third of the population in Darfur. [...] ZAGHAWA [...] The Zaghawa, who call themselves the Beri, straddle the border between Chad and Darfur, Sudan. Their original homeland, Dar Zaghawa, lies in the northern Sahel at the edge of the Sahara desert. [...]A minority in [...]Darfur, the Zaghawa[...]. Though some have remained in their original areas throughout the conflict, many Zaghawa found their way to IDP camps inside Darfur[...]

MASSALIT [...] The Massalit are spread across the Sudan-Chad border, centered at El Geneina, the West Darfur state capital.[...]

DAJO [...] The Dajo are widely believed to be the founders of the first “state” in Darfur, before the Fur Sultanate, as early as the thirteenth century. They are sedentary farmers and their language indicates a Nubian origin[...].

TAMA [...] Just south of Dar Zaghawa and north of Dar Massalit, straddling the Chad-Sudan border, live several small ethnic groups of the Tama language family. [...]

Erenga [...] North of El Geneina in West Darfur live two other small Tama- speaking groups: the Erenga and Misseriya Jebel. The Erenga reside around Sirba and Abu Surug, where they are sedentary farmers.[...]

Misseriya Jebel [...] The Misseriya Jebel live as sedentary farmers around the small but relatively wealthy Jebel Mun massif. Also called Mileri or Mun, they constitute the most striking example of the fluidity of Arab and non-Arab identities. [...]”

(Source: 24 Hours for Darfur – [DARFURIAN VOICES Documenting Darfuriian Refugees’ Views on Issues of Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation](#), July 2010, pg. 25, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How many children belong to these minority and indigenous groups?

On its webpage, which was last updated in 2019, Minority Rights Group provides demographic information about the population of Sudan:

“Approximately 70 per cent of Sudan’s people are characterized as Sudanese Arabs, with a significant black African minority at 30 per cent, including Fur, Beja, Nuba and Fallata.”

(Source: Minority Rights Group – [Sudan](#), last updated 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF reported in their 2016 Child Notice on Sudan, that the last census was completed in 2008 and does not contain a detailed breakdown of ethnic, religious or indigenous groups or about children within them:

“7. The last census, the Sudan Population and Housing Census, was completed in 2008. It remains the major national source of certified information on population dynamics and trends. According to the 2008 census Sudan’s estimated population was 39,154,990, and about half were children.²⁵[...]

14. There is insufficient information from Sudan government sources on specific populations and ethnic groups. Sudan’s size and its ongoing conflicts have made the collection of official statistics difficult. The 2008 census contains no detailed breakdown of ethnic, religious or indigenous groups or about children within them. It does report that 9.1 per cent of the Sudan population were nomadic³⁵”

²⁵ Ministry of Cabinet Central Bureau of Statistics Population Size, Growth, Distribution and Structure (2010) p. 2.

³⁵ Extracted from 2008 census data.

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Notice Sudan](#), 2016, pg. 22, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there notable disparities in the number of children among different ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups? How do these numbers compare as a percentage of the total number of children?

The sources consulted do not contain any information specifically about disparities in the number of children among different ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups in Sudan. However, in this report of a survey carried out in all 18 states

of Sudan by the Federal Ministry of Health and UNICEF with technical support from Valid International and funding from DFID. The data collected during June / July 2013 for 14 states and in November 2013 for the remaining 4 states (Khartoum, Red Sea, South and West Kordofan), provides some relevant insights on disparities in the number of children among different groups in Sudan. Although the report does not explicitly address disparities based on ethnicity or language, it provides data disaggregated at the locality level.

For example the key findings of the report included:

“[...] Results show that stunting is widespread affecting children across the country. A prevalence of global stunting of 30% and above is classified as WHO as ‘high’¹. State-level estimates mask huge disparities in most indicators. 128 of the total 184 localities have a stunting rate classified as high2 (above 30%). There are pockets of very high stunting rates, found mostly in the eastern states of Red Sea, Kassala and Gedaref, with a high of 73% in Gedaref state. Comparison of stunting between the S3M 2013 and the SHHS 2010 is shown below.” (pg. 6)

¹ Physical Status: The use and interpretation of Anthropometry. Report of a WHO expert committee, 1995. Chapter 5, p208 & 212

“[...] 53 of the 184 Localities in Sudan have a severe acute malnutrition rate (measured by MUAC) that is classified as very critical (above 3%). Highest SAM measured was above 20% in three localities in South Darfur and Red Sea States.” (pg. 7)

(Source: Sudan National S3M (2013) – [Report of a Simple Spatial Surveying Method \(S3M\) survey in Sudan. Federal Ministry of Health, Sudan](#), 20 November 2014, pp. 6-7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Here we have compared the UNICEF state profiles data in [6.1. Total number of children disaggregated by age, gender, and percentages in relation to the total population on page 119](#) with data from the above S3M survey, presenting the comparison as a percentage of the total number of children:

South Kordofan:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	714,200
Total children surveyed:	19,307
Percentage surveyed:	2.7%

North Kordofan:	
Total children in the state (0-15 years):	1,100,000
Total children surveyed:	5,611
Percentage surveyed:	0.5%

West Kordofan:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	984,969
Total children surveyed:	17,903
Percentage surveyed:	1.8%

East Darfur:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	Estimated > 850,000 (half of 1.7 million population)
Total children surveyed:	21,777
Percentage surveyed:	2.6%

West Darfur:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	755,700
Total children surveyed:	9,291

Percentage surveyed:	1.2%
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Central Darfur:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	around 1,100,000
Total children surveyed:	10,959
Percentage surveyed:	1.1%

South Darfur:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	1,700,000
Total children surveyed:	40,295
Percentage surveyed:	2.4%

North Darfur:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	1,300,000
Total children surveyed:	79,323
Percentage surveyed:	6.1%

Blue Nile:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	550,000
Total children surveyed:	30,281
Percentage surveyed:	5.5%

White Nile:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	950,000
Total children surveyed:	20,516
Percentage surveyed:	2.2%

Gedarif:	
No date on children, only adolescents (14-19 years):	279,181
Total children surveyed:	37,735
Percentage of adolescents surveyed:	13.5%

Kassala:	
Total children in the state (0-18 years):	1,271,780
Total children surveyed:	33,375
Percentage surveyed:	2.6%

(Source: Combination of UNICEF state Profiles and Sudan National S3M (2013) – [Report of a Simple Spatial Surveying Method \(S3M\) survey in Sudan](#). Federal Ministry of Health, Sudan, 20 November 2014, pg. 6-7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there evidence of social or institutional biases affecting these groups?

This Discussion Paper, published by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), provides insight on the armed conflict in Sudan in its Executive Summary:

“Within days, violence surged in West Darfur, where RSF fighters joined with allied Arab militias to attack mostly ethnic Masalit communities in and around El-Geneina. The situation across the region remained tense for months, with the RSF laying siege to key towns. In late October, as ceasefire talks resumed in Jeddah, the RSF launched a major offensive, taking several bases in key capitals and killing hundreds of civilians including women and children (Neshad 2023).”

(Source: International IDEA – [The War in Khartoum and its Impact on Darfur](#), 21 February 2024, pg. 4, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Discussion page also shared that the Sudanese Experts and Facilitators Group (SEFG), in collaboration with International IDEA, held a webinar on 31 October 2023, to explore the impact of the war in Khartoum on Darfur, especially in the light of its pre-existing interethnic conflicts. Keynote speaker, Adeeb Yousif shared the following insight:

“Ethnopolitical conflict dynamics

“In Darfur, the nation-state is not generally a driver of conflict. Rather, ethnic identities and competition for resources, not political ideology, fuel conflicts in Darfur. I have observed this in the way the fighting has played out since the war in Khartoum started. Darfur also has many pre-existing intercommunal conflicts, such as between Salamat and Beni Halba or other Arab tribes. In addressing the violence in Darfur, we need to address these pre-existing conflicts as well.

I believe the scourge of ‘negative ethnicity’—the manipulation of ethnic identity for narrow personal or political interests with dire consequences—is a real threat to peace, justice, respect for human rights, the rule of law and development in Darfur. The war is playing on ethnic divisions and fuelling conflict. In El-Geneina, West Darfur state, for example, this war has increased the tensions between Masalit and Arab and led to ethnically based atrocities, in which thousands of innocent civilians were killed, including the Governor of West Darfur, Mr Khamis Abdullah Abakar, who belonged to the Masalit ethnic group.

The Arab tribes in Darfur have a major role in fuelling these tensions, as they have recruited their ethnic communities into the RSF and away from the army. In Darfur, the former rebel groups who signed the JPA may also be drawn into the fighting. Two of their leaders have just announced they will support the SAF, but others have tried to remain neutral. The war could metastasize if these various groups start to fight each other.”

(Source: International IDEA – [The War in Khartoum and its Impact on Darfur](#), 21 February 2024, pg. 10, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this joint letter which was collectively signed by over 275 civil society organisations, including Minority Rights Group International and urging the US and UK governments to take urgent and coordinated action to address the escalating atrocities in Sudan states:

“Under the cover of this armed conflict, a distinct and deliberate campaign to displace and destroy populations because of their ethnicity and race is being systematically carried out in Darfur in an effort to complete the genocide that began in 2003.”

(Source: Minority Rights Group International – [Joint letter urging the US and UK governments to take urgent and coordinated action to address the escalating atrocities in Sudan](#), 29 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

7. Family structure, environment, and alternative care

7.1. General family structures and cultural norms

What are the most common family structures (e.g., nuclear, extended, single parent)? And who is the head of the family (family structure)? And are there differences in family structures across different regions?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024, explains the difference between family structures in Sudan’s urban and rural setting:

“[...] In the urban setting, usually the ordinary family structure where it has the father who is living in the family and mother and the siblings. In rural settings, [...] you would find the grandfather is also in the house. And even in some areas, they call it the junior, the senior, like the father. And because in those areas, most of those areas depend on agriculture. And also, for example, in some areas, depending on mining. So the fathers might go away. So the responsible person will be the mothers and also the grandparents in the house in some of the areas. Yeah. So what I’m trying to highlight here or to stress here is [that] the extended family [has] more influence when you go to the rural area than in urban areas.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Similarly, Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“I think it would be in the case of Darfur, which I know much, much better than other regions of Sudan. But I suspect it is true of rural agricultural families as well. The most common family structure I would describe as nuclear, but with important extended features. For example, in Darfur, it would often be not the mother but the aunt who would take an adolescent girl through the process of general mutilation. There are very tight bonds in small villages. And so family, as well as ethnicity, tribe, village, is very important. I would say in Sudan, in the urban areas, you have family structures that are much closer to what we would call a purely nuclear family. But the relationship of aunts and uncles and cousins is always important in Sudan.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information regarding changing dynamics of family structure before and after the war:

“There were many big changes [that affected family structure after the war]. I will try to capture my observation in two parts. The most apparent phenomenon is that families experienced a kind of dispersal. After the war in Khartoum and its extension to Al Jazira, family members were displaced to different areas, for example the parents will be in Madani, a number of the children or kids would be in Port Sudan, Atbara, or other cities. A big number of families experienced dispersal, the same family became separated to many places. For example families who got displaced to the north and tried to enter into Egypt, there are some who remained at the border by Wadi Halfa, and a part of the family crossed into Egypt and the rest faced challenges or problems. So families are dispersed and separated whether inside Sudan or outside. This is the first phenomenon I am observing.

The second phenomenon concerns people who were displaced from Khartoum back to their original states, many of them had lost contact with their communities back there, but they were forced to return, and so you will find in the Sudanese villages, a single home may shelter 6 to 7 to 8 families in one house. For example, in the north where I come from, big or spacious houses usually shelter 3 or 4 people, currently such a home would shelter 5 or 6 families. There is overcrowding of course, life changed of course, the sense of privacy disappeared, the suffering increased, the costs increased, everything changed profoundly. These are the features of life in areas that are not suffering from war and fighting. Areas caught in the fighting of course their conditions are worse. If we speak about the situation in Darfur and the people who got displaced to Chad, the situation is worse, some organisations speak of children dying of hunger, because they cannot reach services: water, electricity, shops, even if there are services the access to them is not guaranteed, they are exposed to fighting and exploitation on their way to these services. This is the very bleak picture of the reality of Sudanese family structures today unfortunately.

Hassan also shared this information regarding street children who are displaced in Sudan:

Sudan is like many other Arab countries; poorer regions have greater numbers of children. In the rural or the marginalised areas within Khartoum, that host a great number of displaced people, a single family may have an average of 8 or 9 or 10 children, at times more. However, in the more urban areas, in the capital for example, before

the war, between 2 or 3 or 4 [children], but in the rural areas the number is higher, from 6 to 7, some areas the family size is about 11.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

In this Rapid Gender Analysis Policy Brief, published in May 2023, Care International, reported that:

“Population data for Sudan is difficult to glean from secondary data as the last official census was in 2008 and current sources only focus on the persons in need.”[...]

“The young population is attributed to Sudan’s high fertility rate with 4.54 children per woman in 2020, low use of contraception at 8.3%¹¹, and low life expectancy (68 years for females and 63 years for males).”

(Source: Care international – [Rapid Gender Analysis Brief: Sudan Conflict Response](#), May 2023, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

As reported by the United Nations Population Fund in 2020:

“The deterioration of the economic situation is affecting IDP women in particular, as they are heads of most households” Expert, West Darfur.

(Source: The United Nations Population Fund, formerly the United Nations Fund (UNFPA) – [Voices from Sudan 2020](#), 2020, pg. 70, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Based on findings from the UNFPA’s 2013 report:

“According to the last census, on average a Sudanese woman gives birth to 5 to 6 children in her lifetime. Fertility trends show a slight decline during the last 27 years (compared to 7 children per woman according to 1973 census data), reflecting some degree of improvement in women’s access to education and employment which are almost universally associated with smaller family size.[...]

The majority of Sudanese household heads are males. However, 28% of households are headed by women, with the proportion being the highest in rural areas. The average household size in Sudan is approximately seven persons.”

(Source: UNFPA – [Population Dynamics in Sudan](#), 2013, last accessed 23 May 2024)

An article published in Child & Family Social Work analysed the parenting and family functioning and lifestyle of African migrants including Sudanese migrants in Australia and noting that:

“[...] The family unit remains traditional and hierarchical, with the father being seen as the head of the family and the person who makes major and final decisions. Mothers and the children (mainly the sons) are consulted at times, exemplified by the following:

the Father is always the one who takes the decision in the family. Sometimes if he thinks that [it is] not necessary for a mother to get involved, he takes the decision. And if he want to tell his wife also, got something in my mind and I want to take the decision on this, that’s fine because it’s up to him

Sudanese father

(Source: André M. N. Renzaho, Julie Green, David Mellor and Boyd Swinburn – [Parenting, family functioning and lifestyle in a new culture: the case of African migrants in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia](#), September 2010, pp. 231-238, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How many children are living in each type of family structure?

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information regarding changing dynamics of family structure before and after the war:

“Sudan is like many other Arab countries; poorer regions have greater numbers of children. In the rural or the marginalised areas within Khartoum, that host a great number of displaced people, a single family may have an average of 8 or 9 or 10 children, at times more. However, in the more urban areas, in the capital for example, before the war, between 2 or 3 or 4 [children], but in the rural areas the number is higher, from 6 to 7, some areas the family size is about 11.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

The UNICEF State Profiles contain data about the number of children in the individual states of Sudan. No state profile has been published for the following states: Northern, River Nile, Khartoum, El Gazira, and Sennar. The Red Sea State Profile contains no data on children population. For Gedarif State only the number of adolescents (aged 14-19) is reported.

Blue Nile: “The population of Blue Nile state is slightly more than 1.3 million people, including many internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are 550,000 children (aged 0-18) in the Blue Nile, the average family size is five and the average population density is 21 people per square kilometer. With more than half of the population being below 24 years of age, Blue Nile is one of the youngest states in Sudan.”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Blue Nile](#), 9 May 2022, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

White Nile: “The population of White Nile state is slightly more than 2.9 million people. There are approximately 950,000 children (aged 0-18) in White Nile, the average family size is five and the average population density is 35 people per square kilometer. Three-quarters of the population lives in rural areas.”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – White Nile](#), 9 May 2022, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Gedarif: “The population of Gedaref state is 2.5 million people, with an annual growth of about five (5) per cent. The average household size is 5.5 people. There are 279,181 adolescents (aged 14-19).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Gedarif](#), 9 May 2022, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Kassala: “Kassala’s state has 2.8 million inhabitants, and the annual population growth rate is about 2.8 per cent. The average household size has 5.5 people. There are 1,271,780 children (aged 0-18) and 25,338 youth (aged 19-24).”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Profile – Kassala](#), 9 May 2022, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In general, do children have specific household responsibilities and is this different for boys and girls? Do children have their own space in the home?

Sources consulted do not specify if children have their own space in the home. Given the ongoing conflict and the displacement of millions of people, it is important to refer to the following relevant sections: [5. Basic rights in Sudan on page 101](#) and [9. Refugees and internally displaced people \(IDP\) on page 194](#). Additionally it is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence.

In this report developed by UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Office Regional Office (MENARO) in collaboration with Equipundo: Center for Masculinities & Social Justice. It states that data collection began in January 2022 and ended in May 2022. Focus group discussions with participants share insights on traditional gender roles and societal expectations regarding gender, sexuality, marriageability, and family honour in Sudan:

“The clear division of gender roles is further extended to children, where young boys are expected to perform tasks and chores outside the household and girls to help with activities inside the house.[...]

Changes are observed among younger women and men in urban communities, who are more in favour of more fluid gender roles. Still, men’s participation in house chores is conditioned by their availability and willingness to help. For them men’s primary responsibility, still, is to provide the main income for the household.[...]

Sexuality, marriageability and family honour: The majority of the study participants stated that girls need to conform to social norms and to maintain good reputations, which greatly affect the reputation of their families and their opportunities to get married. The term ‘good reputation’ revolves around making sure that girls do not engage in any premarital sexual relations or get pregnant outside marriage.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Ending Fgm In Sudan: Making It Possible For Women And Men To Talk About Fgm](#), no date available, pg. 8, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In 2021, International Labour Organization published this report on Sudan, focusing on “*Child Labour Among Forcibly Displaced and Host Communities East Darfur and West Kordofan States*”:

“Characteristics of child labour: forms and sectors – Overall, younger children tend to support household production, while older children contribute more to household chores (girls) and the household income through paid employment. FDP children most often engage in paid employment to substitute the household income and cover school fees. Children most often work in the agricultural sector (farming, livestock herding and fishing), followed by paid employment and supporting household businesses in specialized professions such as welding, brickmaking, masonry, nursing, teaching, trading and construction. A last group engaged in low-skilled labour such as collecting charcoal and firewood, day labour, carrying loads, and delivering water.

[...]

Contributing factors: social norms and attitudes – Lastly, some social norms and attitudes further contribute to the occurrence of child labour. For example, livestock herding for pastoralist communities is not just an income generating activity, but it is the traditional way pastoralist communities live. As a result, children are included in taking on tasks at a very early age. Contribution of children through chores or simple jobs is seen as an essential part of a child’s upbringing.”

[...]

At individual and household level, boys are slightly more likely to engage in child labour than girls. Children living in households that include PLWDs, or are headed by women, or have heads who did not complete primary education, are more likely to engage in child labour. However, addressing these factors alone would not be likely to lead to a significant reduction in children engaging in child labour.

Lastly, another group of concern is children living in pastoralist households. While data obtained on pastoralist children in this assessment is limited, qualitative interviews attest that pastoralist children start contributing to household production at a very young age. Livestock herding for such households the main source of income, livestock rearing and seasonal migration are part of the traditional practices of such groups, in which children are included. In addition, in the specific lifestyle of pastoralist communities, formal education holds limited value, assuming that children will want to carry on community traditions. The formal education system is not currently equipped to service pastoralist children. Some attend school for certain seasons but leave when their family migrates from the area. While inclusion of pastoralist children in mobile education facilities has been effective at small scale, this approach has not been adopted in the formal education system.”

(Source: ILO – [Child Labor Among Forcibly Displaced and Host Communities. East Darfur and East Kordofan States, Sudan](#), 2021, p. iii, 43, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are traditions such as polygamy, levirate⁴⁴ and/or sororate, blood feud, ... common? If so, does this occur in all regions in Sudan or more common for certain regions, if so: which regions?

Although some information was found on polygamy, regional distribution of polygamy rates could not be found. Additionally, no data found on levirate and sororate. It is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence.

⁴⁴ Levirate is a custom where a deceased brother’s brother marries the widow. Sororate is the custom where a widower marries the sister of his deceased wife.

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided the following contextual information in relation to blood feuds in Sudan:

“It varies tremendously. There are no blood feuds in the Nuba Mountains, for example, even though there are different tribes falling under the rubric Nuba. It used to be the case. There have always been blood feuds. There still are often between Arab tribal groups. There are also particularly specific hatreds. So the Zaghawa, for example, are especially disinclined to like the Northern Rizeigat, who are the basis for the Janjaweed and now the Rapid Support Forces. They were particularly hard hit by the Rapid Support Forces coming from the Northern Rizeigat. I wouldn’t call that a blood feud. I’d call that radical ethnic animosity between the two groups. But there are blood feuds. They appear off and on in Darfur between primarily Arab groups. But I don’t think when we’re talking about the genocidal destruction of one ethnic family by another ethnic family, Arab, non-Arab, that we call that a feud. It’s genocide. And in the past, when there have been conflicts between Arab and non-Arab groups, especially when it comes to rural areas where crops had been planted are perhaps ready to be harvested or earlier in the season. But the leaders of the nomadic pastoralists who were moving through a farm area and the owners of the farm area would negotiate— I forget the Arabic word, a settlement fee. How much damage did we do? What would be fair to repay you for that? Now, that wasn’t always the case, but often conflict was settled in that fashion. That has all gone. And, in fact, what we see now are the Janjaweed militias, the kind of ad hoc Arab militias, and the RSF deliberately taking their cattle onto farms, especially those farms where the crops are on the verge of harvesting—letting their animals forage. It’s one of the reasons we have such an acute food shortage in Darfur today. There are different reasons for different food shortages. And in Sudan as a whole, the gradual withering of the agricultural sector under al-Bashir is responsible for the chronic hunger that we see.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In this Rapid Gender Analysis Policy Brief, published in May 2023, Care International, reported:

“Polygamy is a common practice in Sudan with 22% of married women (24% in rural areas versus 17% in urban centres) being in polygynous unions.”

(Source: Care international – [Rapid Gender Analysis Brief: Sudan Conflict Response](#), May 2023, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

A UNFPA, qualitative assessment of gender based violence in Sudan, titled ‘Voices from Sudan 2020, reported:

“Polygamy

Among married women in Sudan, 22% are in polygynous unions.⁹ Polygynous unions are more common among women who live in rural areas (24% compared to 17% for urban) and older women (31% for women 45 to 49 compared to 8% for women 15 to 19) as well as women on lower income levels.¹⁰

Polygamy in Sudan is permitted by the Personal Status Law (see Table 2) and in Sharia’ law, as long as the husband is able to provide and treat all women equally. Polygamy is perceived as a form of violence, if men do not have enough financial resources to provide for their wives “polygamy [is a common type of GBV], without enough financial resources” Woman, Wadi Salih, Central Darfur.

“It is very common practice in our community to marry a very young girl to a married man, as a third or fourth wife; my niece was forced out of school to marry an old man whose daughters are older than her”.¹¹

Respondents reported that violence between different women in polygynous relationships is common “violence results from polygamy” Woman, Eljabalein, White Nile. This is true in unions where wives share the same house. “[A woman lived] in a house separated only by a short wall from that of the first wife. The first wife and her daughters could easily come and attack her. The son’s husband who was younger than her by 4 years was also beating her” GBV helpline service provider. The “young wife fights with the older wife” Woman Refugee, Um Sangour camp, White Nile.

In polygynous relationships, the husband should financially support wives and children equally. Anecdotal evidence exists of the use of polygamy to threaten women, as the financial resources of the family and inheritance of children will be reduced if the men marries an additional wife. “[a man] denied women work, and threatened polygamy if she insisted” Boy, Nertiti, Central Darfur.”

⁹ Polygyny is the most common form of polygamy, entailing marriage of a man with several women

¹⁰ Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics, Sudan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2014, [link](#)

¹¹ El Nagar, Tonnessen, Community views on Child Marriage in Kassala: prospects for change, 2018, [link](#)

(Source: UNFPA – [Voices from Sudan 2020](#), 2020, pg. 15, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Who traditionally takes care of orphans or children separated from their parents and family?

The sources presented below reflect the mobilisation of religious and socio-cultural principles regarding orphans’ care.

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided the following useful contextual information in relation to who takes care of orphans and separated children in Sudan:

“If children are separated from their family it’s— I would call it kindness of strangers. Perhaps more likely if the same ethnic group, a Zaghawa child, or Masalit child, or Berti child. But displacement in Darfur has been so chaotic that there’s really no way to ensure that a child will find any way of connecting with parents or family. I have on my desk— this is all that I have on my desk in many ways. And it’s a young boy, a wide-open expanse in Eastern Chad, and he has no parents, no family, no village members, nothing. There are far, far too many such children. So the question just simply changes character when you’re talking about the aftermath of genocide. The reuniting of families or reuniting of orphans with families is hit-or-miss. Most of the time. The vast majority of the time it’s miss. In Zamzam, there are many families. And we give them special attention. Mothers taking in orphans. Because no one else will. There are many orphans in the camp who are unattached to any family.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

OCHA reported that:

“Efforts are underway to trace the families of the remaining 52 children who are now in foster care among families within their communities. The children receive psychosocial support, including counselling, despite the minimal resources that the child protection partners are operating with.”

(Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – [Situation Report. Sudan](#), 29 March 2021, pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Whilst UNICEF reported:

“National orphan sponsorship policy (2009, under review):

Spearheaded by MASSS, this policy seeks to secure sponsorship and community mobilization for all orphans. The priority is to enforce decrees and directives to support orphans and provide health insurance for foster families. (Translated by bilingual EN-FR researcher).

[...]

160. Over time, the CNBE has developed a national policy for the protection of children who are not cared for by their parents. Its 2011 version aims to “ensure care and protection for children

children not cared for by their parents and to limit the problem”. It cites religious and social moral principles as the basis for caring for abandoned children. It calls for awareness-raising through religion, considered essential

in strategies, programs and policies, and focused on chastity, preventing adultery and highlighting its “infamous consequences”.²⁰⁵

161. An older report takes up Quranic teachings on the care of abandoned children (including orphans and separated children) in more detail, stating for example:

“A Muslim person must care for a child found on the road by offering immediate protection, or will be punished; a Muslim person may keep the child if the authorities consider him or her a suitable guardian; if a Muslim person is considered a suitable guardian, he or she will be followed in his or her adoption efforts ; Muslims are encouraged to assist adopted children, orphans and children in serious situations; the Muslim state is obliged to contribute to the welfare of these children; children born out of wedlock are not affected by the guilt of their parents and are born free of sin”. ²⁰⁶ (In-house translation. The translator is bilingual EN-FR).

²⁰⁵ National Council for Child Welfare National Policy on Welfare and Protection of Children Deprived of Parental Care (2011) p. 11.

²⁰⁶ Shulli A. et al Sudanese Attitudes and the Institutional Set Up for Alternative Family Care (2003) p. 7.

ORIGINAL source:

“Politique nationale de parrainage des orphelins (2009, en cours de révision):

Pilotée par le MASSS, cette politique cherche à obtenir pour tous les orphelins parrainages et mobilisation de la communauté. Il s’agit en priorité de faire appliquer les décrets et directives afin de soutenir les orphelins et de fournir une assurance-maladie aux familles d’accueil.

[...]

160. Le CNBE a développé avec le temps une politique nationale de protection des enfants non pris en charge par leurs parents. Sa version 2011 vise à « assurer soin et protection aux enfants non pris en charge par leurs parents et à limiter le problème ». Elle cite les principes moraux religieux et sociaux comme socle de la prise en charge des enfants abandonnés. Elle appelle à la sensibilisation par la religion, considérée comme essentielle dans les stratégies, programmes et politiques et axée sur la chasteté, la prévention de l’adultère et la mise en évidence de ses « conséquences infâmes ». ²⁰⁵

161. Un rapport plus ancien reprend les enseignements coraniques sur la prise en charge des enfants abandonnés (dont les orphelins et les enfants séparés) plus en détail, précisant par exemple :

« Une personne musulmane doit s’occuper d’un enfant trouvé sur la route en lui offrant une protection immédiate, ou sera puni ; une personne musulmane peut garder l’enfant si les autorités la considèrent comme un gardien adapté ; si une personne musulmane est considérée comme un gardien adapté, elle sera suivie dans ses démarches d’adoption ; les Musulmans sont encouragés à assister les enfants adoptés, les orphelins et les enfants en situation grave ; l’État musulman est tenu de contribuer au bien-être de ces enfants ; les enfants nés hors mariage ne sont pas touchés par la culpabilité de leurs parents et naissent libre de tout péché » ²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Conseil national du bien-être de l’enfant Politique nationale sur le bien-être et la protection des enfants non pris en charge par leurs parents (2011) p. 11.

²⁰⁶ Shulli A. et al Sudanese Attitudes and the Institutional Set Up for Alternative Family Care (Attitudes soudanaises et cadre institutionnel de prise en charge familiale alternative, non traduit, 2003) p. 7.

(Source: UNICEF – [Analyse de Situation des enfants au Soudan](#), 2016, pp. 30-70, last accessed 23 May 2024)

7.2. Culture context and parental style

Are there significant regional or ethnic differences in parenting styles within Sudan, and if so, what are they?
Are authoritarian parenting styles common in Sudan?

An anonymous source that Asylos corresponded with explained the following differences between the regional and ethnic differences in parenting styles in Sudan:

“There are regional and ethnic differences in parenting styles across Sudan, for example between the farmers in the rural areas and the pastoralist and nomadic communities across Sudan in terms of culture and parenting style and

also access to education where the farmers have more access to education, health and other services. Another view point is between the Islamic communities and the non-Islamic communities in the Nuba mountains and Blue Nile state for example where Christianity and the old African religions are still practices leading to an obvious difference in the parenting styles. Additionally, the access to education and basic services also has a big influence for those who are located in the central and northern part of Sudan they have been fortunate with access to most of the service while for those in the Eastern region of the country, the western and southern part where the access to education and exposure to knowledge and other cultures are limited, you will realise a difference in a parenting style, Sudan is very rich when it comes to ethnic groups costumes and traditions which are affecting the parenting styles. Another dynamic is the Sudan internal conflicts, regions like Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan which have been affected by the conflict for decades and the populations have suffered from several cycles of displacement have also been a dynamic in parenting where the children born and raised in camps and settlements with limited resources and the risk of another displacement, those realities have also led to a difference in the parenting style from those who are living in more stabilised areas.”

(Source: Interview with anonymous source, 30 May 2024)

Following interviews with 39 human rights defenders and woman human rights defenders between July 2020 and June 2021, DefendDefenders highlighted the following incident of child abuse:

“In March 2021, 13-year-old Samah al-Hadi was shot three times and run over by a car, allegedly by her father, after she requested to transfer schools. Despite the fact that neighbours told police that the father was known to abuse his children, he was released without charge. No post-mortem was carried out and the father was given permission to quickly bury Samah’s body. The case caused outrage on social media in Sudan, with a petition to re-open the police file amassing close to 3,000 signatures. Many women spoke out online, recounting times that they had been subject to violence at home – drawing attention to the high rates of domestic violence in Sudan, where it is not specifically covered by law. Those who have spoken out about Samah’s death have faced harassment online and reprisals from the government”

(Source: DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) – [An unfinished revolution: The situation of women human rights defenders in Sudan](#), December 2021, Post-Revolution Climate for WHRDS, pg. 50, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan outlines statistics on child discipline:

“[...] Generally, households employ a combination of violent disciplinary practices, reflecting caregivers’ motivation to control children’s behaviour by any means possible. While 52.8 percent of children experienced psychological aggression, about 61.3 percent experienced physical punishment. The most severe forms of physical punishment (hitting the child on the head, ears or face or hitting the child hard and repeatedly) are overall less common: 13.6 percent of children were subjected to severe punishment.

The survey reveals no variations between male and female children who were subjected to physical discipline: male (61.6 percent) and female children (60.8 percent). Differentials with respect to many of the background variables were relatively small. Children living in rural areas (62.3 percent), while those living urban areas (68.2 percent), while those living in the richest households (71.6 percent) were likely than those living in poor households (54.1 percent) of children to be subjected to any violent discipline method.

Overall, 52.8 percent of children in the aged group 1-14 years experienced psychological aggression in the month preceding the survey. River Nile state was reported of having the highest proportion (69.6 percent) and Central Darfur state (12.6 percent) the lowest of the children aged 1-14 years who experienced psychological aggression. Children between 10-14 years were slightly more likely to experience non-violent discipline than the other age groups (23.8 percent).

(Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan – [SUDAN Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 Final Report](#), February 2016, pg. 201, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In her dissertation “Supervision during out of school hours: An exploratory study looking at parenting, commitments and needs of Sudanese families living on the Atherton Gardens Estate, Fitzroy”, author Ashani Amarasena noted that:

“Most African families including from Sudan, use both a collectivist and authoritarian approach to parenting in their home countries. That is, raising a child are activities that rely on the support of immediate and extended family systems, as well as close friends and neighbors. Similarly, family loyalty, adherence to societal and cultural norms, and obeying authority and elders are the fundamental core values underpinning the authoritarian parenting strategies.

The necessity of children respecting and obeying the older generation, even those of no familial relation, was paramount to maintaining social order.”

(Source: Ashani Amarasena – [Supervision during out of school hours: An exploratory study looking at parenting, commitments and needs of Sudanese families living on the Atherton Gardens Estate, Fitzroy](#), July 2012, pg. 19, last accessed 23 May 2024)

An article published in the Journal Child & Family Social Work analysed the parenting and family functioning and lifestyle of African migrants including Sudanese migrants in Australia, describing the parental roles, the way they act with regards to their children as well as the values that they instil. In addition, they describe how the parenting style is also collectivist:

“Obedience and expectations

It remains an expectation of parents’ roles in African communities that the older generation is in authority.”

“Parents reported monitoring their children’s friends and movements, a finding later validated by teenage participants. Teenagers are subjected to close supervision in terms of who they visit; with whom they socialize, play, or spend time; the food they eat; and activities they undertake. In most cases children have to do as they are told by parents without being given an opportunity to provide their perspectives.” (pg. 231)[...]

“Family functioning appeared to be largely characterized by preservation of cultural values such as collectivism or functioning of the wider family network and community, and hierarchical structures in decision-making. Important roles for fathers were as disciplinarians and teachers of family values early in their children’s lives and passing on knowledge of what is permissible to the next generation. [...] This was part of a collectivist tradition of having input.”(pp. 235-236)

“We found that African parents tend to remain authoritarian in their role and attempt to control their children. They reinforce obedience and expectations, closely scrutinize their children’s behaviour and social environment, and use discipline and rewards to do so.”(pg. 237)[...]

“pret and re-assess their parenting practices. Parental practices of continuing to instil discipline and family and community values, establishing expectations early in children’s lives, sharing parenting responsibility across a community, and expectations that the older generation is in authority, are consistent with parenting practices prior to migration where support from the immediate and extended family system as well as close friends and neighbours is central to raising a child and resolving family conflicts (Fu-Kiau and Lukondo-Wamba 1988; Pettys & Balgopal 1998; Maiter et al. 2004) and older children are left in charge of young siblings (Guerin & Guerin (2002). This collectivist approach to parenting has popularized the African adage –‘it takes a whole village to raise a child.’” (pp. 237-238)

(Source: André M. N. Renzaho, Julie Green, David Mellor and Boyd Swinburn – [Parenting, family functioning and lifestyle in a new culture: the case of African migrants in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia](#), September 2010, pp. 231-238, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How does authoritarian parenting impact the rights, welfare, and development of children and young people in Sudan?

An article published in the Journal Child & Family Social Work analysed the parenting and family functioning and lifestyle of African migrants including Sudanese migrants in Australia. They found the following on how the parents monitored their children as well as the gender specific roles within the family:

“Parents reported monitoring their children’s friends and movements, a finding later validated by teenage participants. Teenagers are subjected to close supervision in terms of who they visit; with whom they socialize, play, or spend time; the food they eat; and activities they undertake. In most cases children have to do as they are told by parents without being given an opportunity to provide their perspectives.”

Another part of the same article, noted that:

“Interaction between parents and children remain gender specific, and the family unit remains traditional and hierarchical, with the father being seen as the head of the family and the person who makes major and final decisions. Mothers and the children (mainly the sons) are consulted at times, exemplified by the following:

the Father is always the one who takes the decision in the family. Sometimes if he thinks that [it is] not necessary for a mother to get involved, he takes the decision. And if he want to tell his wife also, got something in my mind and I want to take the decision on this, that’s fine because it’s up to him.
Sudanese father”

The authors continued to explained the gender roles evolving with the use of a quote by a Sudanese mother:

“Nevertheless, there was emerging evidence of increasing gender tolerance resulting in intergenerational conviviality, where parents and children participated in discussions and decision making: “[...] it’s a collective decision of the family, we’ll all sit down together and discuss about the topic and then we will all reach an agreement”. - Sudanese Mother”

(Source: André M. N. Renzaho, Julie Green, David Mellor and Boyd Swinburn – [Parenting, family functioning and lifestyle in a new culture: the case of African migrants in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia](#), September 2010, pp. 31-235, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Special protection measures for children in Sudan

8. Special protection measures in Sudan

8.1. Children in conflict with the law

8.1.1. Legislation and policy

What is the age of criminal responsibility?

According to a new amendment to the Criminal Law Act 1991:

“Minors will be held criminally liable from the age of 12 years.”

(Source: Library of Congress – [Sudan: New Law Amending Penal Code Takes Effect](#), July 23, 2020, last accessed: last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is capital punishment and life imprisonment prohibited below the age of 18? If not, have capital punishment and life imprisonment been implemented for children or can children be sentenced to death but the sentence is only implemented after the child turns 18?

According to a new amendment to the Criminal Law Act 1991:

“Law No. 12 has prohibited the implementation of the death penalty against individuals younger than 18 years of age.”

(Source: Library of Congress – [Sudan: New Law Amending Penal Code Takes Effect](#), July 23, 2020, last accessed: last accessed 23 May 2024)

A UNICEF State Party Report stated that in Sudan:

“A juvenile delinquent may be sentenced to death only for an offence punishable by penalties and sanctions, in accordance with provisions of Islamic law. Nor may he be sentenced to life imprisonment.”

(Source: UNICEF – [State Party Reports Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is a specialised juvenile justice system in place?

UNICEF, in its 2016 Child Notice report on Sudan, explained the legal framework to protect the rights of children in the justice system. Although the report included efforts protect the rights of children in the justice system, it's important to note that this information is outdated and that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering ongoing conflict, displacement of millions of people and governmental collapse in Sudan:

“210. The Child Act states that: ‘A minor shall not be considered to commit a crime but measures of care and correction [...] shall be applied to whoever reaches seven years old as the court thinks fit.’²⁴⁷ The Child Act’s definition links to Article 68(1) that prohibits criminal proceedings against a ‘delinquent’ child. The Act is firm in defining 12 years as the age of criminal responsibility, while the Criminal Act allows courts to interpret this age as beginning at seven years.

211. The Child Act prohibits the death penalty for children under 18 years old. However, the law conflicts with the 2005 Interim National Constitution (INC), Article 36 that allows children to be sentenced to death; a provision that has been enforced.²⁴⁸ One of the last cases where a juvenile was judicially killed was in 2009. The death sentence was passed both because of the sharia hudud concept of retribution (in this case for murder), and a legal judgment that the boy had reached puberty and was thus criminally responsible.²⁴⁹

212. Since the enactment of the 2010 Child Act children sentenced to death have not been executed. Three other Constitutional Court decrees have also strengthened the prohibition of the death penalty against children (Case No. MD/GD/1999/4m 23 March 2000; MD/GD/18/2005 and MD/ GD/81/2006).²⁵⁰ The Constitutional Court in its decision on the case No. 51/2013 removes the existing inconsistencies between the Child Act and the 1991 Criminal Law 1991 (see sections 2.2 & 2.9)

213. A September 2015 workshop on the UPR recommendations confirmed that a constitutional circular has been issued banning the death penalty for anyone under 18 years old.²⁵¹ The law means that no death sentence can be applied to any person below the age of 18 years, even if the criminal act happened before that age.

214. Since 2006, the development of the Family and Child Police Units (FCPU: see sections 2.8 & 4.3) alongside juvenile courts and a growing body of child-focused law, policies and strategies responding to the international instruments signed by Sudan all represent progress in the development of specialist juvenile justice provision. Current limitations are discussed below and in the previous sections referred to.

215. As also noted previously, all children – victims, witnesses, and those accused – are supported by the FCPU (operating in every state) and all children (including those in conflict zones) have access to these FCPU. Sudan is presently considering the third optional protocol to the CRC (offering children improved access to justice through an international complaints mechanism for violations of their rights). A high-level ministerial committee leads this process.

216. Two specific alternatives to detention for juveniles, pre and post trial, are contained in the Child Act: a police warning or caution, and early (conditional) release from detention. Article 57(2) places responsibility on social services offices to offer support to these children, as an alternative to the child going through formal court procedures.²⁵² Its provisions support alternatives to post-trial detention as a general principle, headed by Article 5(2)(I) which says trial of children in conflict with the law should, ‘aim at his social re- accommodation’.

217. The Child Act enables the NCCW to make further enforceable instruments so the Act can be implemented. Already in force is the Regulation on Social Probation (2012). Two others are drafted: on diversion that includes restorative justice measures, and on community service. The Social Probation Regulation offers specific post trial alternatives to detention by placing a child under the care of: the probation service; a social probation officer for a child released early from detention, or persons qualified and able to raise the child.”²⁵³

²⁴⁷ Child Act 2010, Article 4 and Criminal Act, Article 9.

²⁴⁸ University of Khartoum Faculty of Law & Sudan Human Rights Monitor Constitutional Protection of Human Rights in Sudan (2014) p. 67.

²⁴⁹ Wikipedia available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment_in_Sudan (accessed 19 October 2015).

²⁵⁰ National Council for Child Welfare, Director of Legislation and Justice for Children, Personal Communication, 12 October 2015.

²⁵¹ Constitutional Court Decision 51/13.

²⁵² International Development Law Organisation & UNICEF Promotion of Diversion and Alternative Measures to Detention p. 56.

²⁵³ International Development Law Organisation & UNICEF Promotion of Diversion and Alternative Measures to Detention p. 58.

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Notice Sudan](#), 2016, pp. 74-75, last accessed 29 May 2024)

Is legal counsel and representation provided to every child facing criminal accusations, as well as to child witnesses and victims?

In the 2021 UNICEF Child Protection report statistics were given on the legal system in Sudan and how many children have received services including legal services:

“As a result, 23,677 children (6,168 girls and 17,509 boys), including victims, witnesses or alleged offenders- as well as children on the move- in 77 localities in all states, received multi-sectoral services including [...] legal services through FCPUs and one stop centers; bringing the total to 199,223 children reached (74,844 girls and 124,379 boys).”

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection 2021](#), 03 April 2022, pg. 13, last accessed 23 May 2024)

An evaluation was made on the Family and Child Protection Unit by UNICEF and stated the results gathered:

“The purpose of this evaluation [Family and Child Protection Unit] was to assess the extent to which the Justice for Children system reform in Sudan, during the period 2007- 2017, has contributed to: 1) Protection of children in contact with the law as victims, witnesses and alleged offenders, 2) Reduction in the deprivation of liberty for children in conflict with the law, 3) Increase in the use of diversion from the judicial process, 4) Enhanced national legislation, regulations and procedures, as well as the enhanced application of relevant legal standards for children, 5) Increased awareness of children and communities of child rights and related legislation, 6) sustainability of services for children in contact with the law.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection 2020](#), 29 March 2021, pg. 22, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there legal provisions for alternatives to detention?

The UNICEF Child Protection Report of 2021 discussed what would be some alternatives to detention for children in Sudan:

“Children in conflict with the law (offenders) continued to benefit from alternative measures to detention, including diversion of pre-trial detention, which shows a significant impact of the justice institutions learning and the quality of the specialised services provided to children. This was also the result of investing in capacity-building as well as the development and roll-out of standard operating procedures specific to improve justice for children.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Protection 2021](#), 03 April 2022, pg. 13, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The new amendments to the Criminal Law Act 1991 with regards to Article 47, the measures prescribed for juveniles. The juveniles have several alternatives:

“(c) handing over the juvenile, to his father, or any other trustworthy person, after undertaking to properly look after him; (d) placing the juvenile, under social supervision, for a period, not less than one year; (e) sending him to be detained in any of the reformation and social welfare institutions, for the purpose of reforming and educating him, for a term not less than two years, and not exceeding five years.”

(Source: Redress – [Sudan Legal Amendments Explanatory Table](#), July 2020, pp. 2-3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.1.2. Application/implementation

Do all children have equal access to the juvenile justice system?

Although not enough evidence has been found to confirm the existence of a standardised juvenile justice system across the country, some literature has mentioned specific justice mechanisms aimed at a juvenile population, such as child protection units and camps, although their use is arbitrary and has seen to vary according to the treatment of police officers or authorities. In the context of the ongoing conflict, there have been reports of arbitrary arrests by the RSF, as documented by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS):

“The children, aged between 14 to 16-years-old were arrested on 6,7 and 8 November 2023 following the seizure of the SAF military base (15th Division) in West Darfur after the RSF launched an attack on it. They were arrested from the neighboring areas of Ardmata IDP camp, Alezaa and Aljazeera neighborhoods. The children were taken to the former joint Sudanese-Chadian Forces base which was seized by RSF on 15 April 2023 where they remain detained.”

(Source: African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) – [Sudan: Sixty-six children detained and used as pawns by RSF against SAF](#), 12 January 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In many cases, these unequal processings are related to civil protests. Amnesty International’s 2023 Report denounces the unlawful arrest and mistreatment of people with relation to the 2021 coup, including minors:

“Between October 2021 and April 2022, the UN Designated Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan and the UN Joint Human Rights Office in Sudan documented the arbitrary arrest and detention of 1,293 people in connection with the coup or with protests against the coup. They included 143 women and 157 children, including two girls. Many others were held for short periods and released without charge.

The arrests were carried out by security forces including anti-riot police, Central Reserve Police and military units from the Sudan Armed Forces, along with unidentified plain-clothes agents. Their ill-treatment of protesters included stripping child detainees naked and threatening sexual violence against women.”

(Source: Amnesty International – [Amnesty International Report 2022/23](#), 2023, pg. 346, last accessed 27 May 2024)

The Guardian also reported on the detainment of teenagers as a result of protests that took place in Khartoum:

“Amnesty International has called for the release of two teenagers who have been detained and allegedly tortured in Sudan in connection with the killing of a police officer during pro-democracy protests in Khartoum.

Mohamed Adam, known as Tupac, 17, and Mohamed al-Fateh, 18, have been held without charge since 15 January. Amnesty said: “There are credible concerns the youths were abducted and held without charge, in violation of their due process rights, and subjected to torture while in detention.”

It demanded the teenagers are released or charged and remanded by an independent court.

According to their lawyer, Rana Abdulghafar Abdulraheem, Tupac, who is a member of a group called Ghadiboun, which means “the angered people”, was taken from his hospital bed by police. He’d been injured by a teargas canister during protests in the capital.

Fateh was arrested in a mosque near where the demonstrations took place. It is understood he wasn’t involved in the protests.

Abdulraheem said both teenagers had been tortured. The lawyer said she had seen cigarette burns on Fateh’s head and he had not been allowed visitors. “I believe they didn’t want us to see him because he was in bad shape,” she said.

Tupac’s mother, Nidal Sulieman, said her son had problems with his blood pressure but had not been allowed to see a doctor or to take medicine since his arrest.

Requests for the pair to be examined by doctors, allowed under Sudanese law, were rejected.

[...]

The police did not respond to comment about the detentions.

The governing sovereign council has promised to investigate violence used against the protesters.”

(Source: The Guardian: Zeinab Mohammed Salih – [Teenagers detained and allegedly tortured in Sudan must be released, says Amnesty](#), 3 March 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In 2016, UNICEF, documented in its Child Notice on Sudan that:

“[...]The Child Act contains a whole chapter devoted to juvenile justice. Nonetheless, and as described earlier (see sections 2.8 & 4.3), full equal access to justice for all children, including those in conflict with the law, is not yet realised. Table 18 summarises the situation.”

Table 18: Equal access to justice for children

Towards equality	Towards inequality
All children (through parents or guardians) may bring actions concerning rights violations to court (<i>section 2.8</i>).	Specialist child legal aid not mentioned in the Child Act and no provision for it in Sudan ²⁵⁶ (<i>also section 4.3</i>).
Child victims and witnesses entitled to legal representation (<i>section 4.3</i>).	Costs of representation borne by families which most poor families and children living alone cannot afford ²⁵⁷ (<i>also section 4.3</i>).
Functioning FCPUs in every state, supported by social service office (<i>section 4.3</i>).	Only children accused of crimes entitled to legal aid costs (<i>section 4.3</i>).
A few independent lawyers provide services free to children (<i>section 4.3</i>).	Very few lawyers specialised in child law in Sudan (<i>section 4.3</i>).
	Training of all professionals involved in access to juvenile justice/children in conflict with law inadequate ²⁵⁸

258 Nilsson A. Eastern and Central Africa Contextual Analysis (2012) p. 67.

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Notice Sudan](#), 2016, pg. 76, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do all children, in conflict with the law, have equal access to legal advice?

In 2016, UNICEF, documented in its Child Notice on Sudan that:

“Some lawyers provide services for free to FCPUs¹¹², and the Ministry of Justice (MJ) provides legal aid to children accused of serious crimes through the legal counsel or through volunteer lawyers from the Bar Association¹¹³. Specialist legal aid services for children do not exist in Sudan and few lawyers work in this field. In 2014, a special section to provide legal assistance to children was established at the MJ. Assistance is available for all such matters, not only major offences. Among all sources consulted no data was found on whether specific groups of children are less likely to obtain access to legal advice than others.”

112 Extracted from November 2015 administrative data of the National Mechanism for FCPUs

113 National Council for Child Welfare, Director of Legislation and Justice for Children, Personal Communication, 12 October 2015.

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Notice Sudan](#), 2016, pg. 45, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are any alternatives to detention (e.g. community services for older children) considered for petty crimes for example? Are children who have served their sentence subject to discrimination? In what way?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“Yeah. After they’ve done this service and they’ve been convicted and they’re released, do they face any discrimination going back into society? Definitely. They face some challenges and difficulties, yeah.

When asked if he could explain a bit more on the kind of difficulties and challenges they face? Referring specifically to children born out of wedlock, Ahmed answered that:

[...]Institutionally, [...] they don’t face such challenges because nobody would give them a kind of focus. However, in the community, they look at them as a criminal rather than being a child who will be rehabilitated.

[...]Stigma[...] will follow them even when they go to marriage. And even, for example, those children who have been illegally being born, also [...]face stigma in the society. [...] They also feel the stigma of marriage and being associated with his community. And usually, they try to hide [...] this [...]when they go to work, when they go to apply for applications. [...] That affects everything.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In June 2023, the United Nations reported on arbitrary arrests and detention in Sudan, noting that:

“[...]33. Between 30 June 2022 and 26 February 2023, the Joint Office documented the arrest of 417 people (334 men, 50 women, and 33 children, including 1 girl). [...] The men arrested were sent to police stations in Khartoum and Omdurman and children were sent to family and child protection units. However, a girl arrested on 30 June 2022 was sent to Omdurman women’s prison, together with 32 women arrested on the same day. Those arrested were charged with public order offences¹⁶ (under articles 67, 69, 77, 78 and 79 of the Criminal Act 1991).”

¹⁶ Charges included “rioting”, “disturbing the peace”, “public nuisance, alcohol and gambling”, “drinking, alcohol and nuisance” and “dealing in alcohol”.

(Source: United Nations – [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), 12 May 2023, para 33, pg. 6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to US DOS, street children who commit crimes are usually sent to government camps:

“Police typically sent homeless children who had committed crimes to government camps for indefinite periods. Health care, schooling, and living conditions were generally very basic in these camps.”

(Source: US DOS – [Sudan 2022 Human Rights Report](#), 2023, pg. 27, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.1.3. Statistics

How many children are in detention? For what reason? Are these children separated from incarcerated adults? Are children of different genders accommodated/detained separately? Are rehabilitation or aftercare services available for children after their sentence?

No information was found on the main reasons that lead to child imprisonment, from the sources consulted. Similarly, no information could be found on rehabilitation or aftercare services available for children after their sentence. It is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering the ongoing conflict and displacement of millions of people. However, Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 recalled the following experience:

“[...]Last year in August, and when I was in Al Jazirah state, [the] MSF team called me to respond [to] some of the issues of the children. They were in [a] rehabilitation centre in Khartoum, but [were] transferred here to Al Jazirah

state. They were in a place called Al-Hasaheisa locality. Unfortunately, they were in jail there. In Al Jazirah, in Al-Hasaheisa in particular, because there is no place like rehabilitation centre for them to be sent to.”

[...] Mainly children. They have different accommodations for males and females. However, I don’t know what was being detained for.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In a survey conducted by the Mixed Migration Centre, covering experiences of refugees and migrants fleeing Sudan to Addis Ababa as a result of the 2023 conflict, MMC reported that:

“[...] Youth more commonly cited experiencing or witnessing detention (52/83) compared to adults over the age of 25 (29/57).”

(Source: The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) – [MMC Eastern and Southern Africa Snapshot](#), 31 December 2023, pg. 3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this news article, published by the New Arab “In the shadows of Sudan’s war, illegal detention sites surge”, the New Arab reports that:

“In just five months of conflict, at least 52 such new detention sites have been established in Khartoum state alone, according to a recent report by the pro-democracy [Emergency Lawyers](#) based on more than 60 testimonies, including dozens of former detainees. [...]

Conditions in all illegal detention facilities, regardless of which of the warring sides run them, are described as appalling. Common to all are the cruel treatment of civilians and military prisons alike and the widespread use of torture, including electrocutions, hanging by the legs, starvation, and forced labour such as digging graves for the dead.[...]

“Salah told TNA that there are also numerous children in the same detention facilities [as adults], most of them over the age of 12, as well as “a large number of children fighting with the forces of either side after being recruited as child soldiers”.”

The situation of detainees in illegal detention sites is seriously compounded by the lack of medical services and their poor hygienic conditions, including a lack of ventilation and limited clean water and toilets. The report stresses that this is one of the main reasons for the death of inmates, especially those severely tortured or suffering from a chronic illness.[...]

Sudanese security forces also illegally detained hundreds of protesters in the months that followed the contested military coup of October 2021 that put an end to the democratic transition, according to a separate HRW report. It documented ill-treatment in detention, including stripping children naked and threats of sexual assault against women.”

(Source: The New Arab – [In the shadows of Sudan’s war, illegal detention sites surge](#), 25 September 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

A recent UN report also informed on the imprisonment of a girl in a women’s prison:

“However, a girl arrested on 30 June 2022 was sent to Omdurman women’s prison, together with 32 women arrested on the same day.”

(Source: United Nations – [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), 12 May 2023, pg. 6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are specific groups of children overrepresented in the juvenile justice system? If so, which?

Current information on whether specific groups of children are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system is limited. It is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering the ongoing conflict and displacement of millions of people. However for context, the following relevant information has been included:

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“It’s certainly the case that dark-skinned people, whether they be from the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, South Sudan, Darfur, are certainly discriminated against. They’re often beaten gratuitously by the police. They’re incarcerated. They’re denied educational opportunities. So discrimination is rampant. They’re certainly way overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. And [the] juvenile justice system implies there’s a justice system that distinguishes between adults and children in Khartoum that doesn’t really exist.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

8.2. Victims of child trafficking

8.2.1. Legislation and application

Did Sudan ratify the optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography?

In this press release, published in October 2004, UNICEF commented that:

“[...]UNICEF welcomed today the ratification by the President of Sudan, Omar el-Bashir, of two UN Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of Child. The Optional Protocols aim at strengthening the protection of children from recruitment into armed forces and from sexual exploitation.

[...]UNICEF views the ratification of the protocols as acknowledgement by the Government of its responsibility to remove children from the fighting forces and to protect children from sexual exploitation and trafficking.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan ratifies two protocols for the protection of children’s rights](#), Oct 2004, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Did Sudan ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children?

In this news article the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) commented that:

“In response, the Sudanese Government adopted a law to combat human trafficking on 3 March 2014, and on 2 December 2014 acceded to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime](#). Furthermore, Sudan recently established a National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking.”

(Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – [UNODC Supports Sudanese Efforts to Curb Human Trafficking](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is human trafficking prohibited by national law and are perpetrators prosecuted? Are witnesses in criminal proceedings by national law protected against offenders?

UNDP reports explained key provisions and penalties under Sudan’s Combating of Human Trafficking Act of 2014 and Child Law of 2010:

“HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Combating of Human Trafficking Act of 2014 provides heavy penalties for human trafficking, which include imprisonment for 3–20 years, and the death penalty in the following cases:

if the victim is female or a child under 18 years, or is disabled;
if the offender is the victim’s spouse or one of her ascendants, descendants, guardians, or having control over her;
if a victim has been subjected to sexual abuse, removal of organs, or used in prostitution, or any act, as may by its nature degrade human dignity.

There are penalties for harbouring offenders and concealing money derived from criminal activities. Human trafficking over the Internet is also criminalized. Consent of the victim to the offences of human trafficking shall have no effect.

The act imposes legal safeguards for the protection of victims and witnesses, requiring “the Committee, the Public Prosecution and the competent court shall take such measures as may secure the provision of protection for the victims and witnesses, and prevent influence thereon; together with preserving the right to defence and requirements of the doctrine of confrontation of the parties.”

Regarding alien victims, competent authorities in the State, in coordination with the authorities concerned in other States, are required to strive to facilitate repatriation of alien victims to their homeland, and take such measures as may be necessary for their safety.

To facilitate compensation, the act exempts victims from judicial fees pertaining to action for compensation of injury sustained as a result of their being subjected to trafficking offences. Special prosecutors are required to be appointed to investigate human trafficking cases. The act does not create an offence for people smuggling, restricting its provisions to human trafficking.

The Child Law of 2010 prohibits abducting children and selling and transferring organs from children. Punishment includes the death penalty or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 20 years and a fine. The Child Law also prohibits paid or unpaid employment of children for the purpose of sexual activities, using children in servitude, or exploiting children in serfdom. The penalty for such violations is imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years and a fine.”

(Source: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) – [Sudan Gender Justice & The Law](#), 2018, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this news article, the EU reported on the measures of National Action Plan 2017-2019:

“Building on the previous phase

On 30 August 2021, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCT) launched the National Action Plan for Combatting Human Trafficking 2021-2023 in Khartoum.

[...] Amongst the measures adopted, there are:

- Access to a microfinance programme and to vocational and technical education and job opportunities to reduce poverty and increase livelihood options for young people, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- [...]
- More safe houses and secured shelters for rescued victims.
- [...] and the access for victims of trafficking to legal aid to improve investigation and prosecution.

(Source: European Union – [Sudan launched its National Action Plan to counter and prevent human trafficking](#), 30 August 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What is the authority/unit/department in charge of protecting child victims of trafficking?

UNHCR reported that:

“Mixed migration and counter trafficking responses are coordinated through the State Committee on Counter-trafficking (CCT) in Kassala, chaired by Kassala Ministry of Social Welfare and supported by UNHCR, and the East Sudan Mixed-Migration Working Group.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Annual Results Report 2022 Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this 2019, article “Human trafficking/Is Sudan committed to fighting human trafficking?”, ENACT⁴⁵ also reported that:

“In 2014, the Sudanese parliament passed the Combating of Human Trafficking Act. As the country’s first law to deal specifically with human trafficking, it was intended to align with the United Nations (UN) definitions on the crime of human trafficking. At its onset, the act called for the establishment of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCT) as the highest authority for combating and addressing this crime. The NCCT is also tasked with developing a national strategy to address the causes of human trafficking.”

(Source: ENACT – [Human trafficking: Is Sudan committed to fighting human trafficking?](#), March 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The most recent US Department of State country report on Trafficking in Persons report covering 2023, explained that:

“The Ministry of Interior’s Counter Trafficking Unit was responsible for anti-trafficking law enforcement and could provide services to identified trafficking victims, including maintaining one shelter, which was reportedly in need of repairs.”

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children protected by national law and policy against sale, trafficking and exploitation? How is this done in practice? How is the law enforced?

ENACT documented that while Sudan has established an action plan and ratified international protocols, the actual implementation and impact of these measures have been minimal, with little progress in the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of human traffickers:

“In 2017, the NCCT [National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking] launched its first action plan to combat human trafficking, with the support and cooperation of development partners. The main pillars of the plan are to safeguard people against trafficking by strengthening the criminal justice system to investigate, prosecute and punish traffickers, and secure justice for victims. However, thus far, the action plan has not recorded any notable impacts.

Despite having relevant legislation and an action plan, Sudan has not seen any measurable progress in combating human trafficking.

In mid-2018, Vice-President Hassabo Abdel-Rahman said that the government was considering establishing a strategy to combat human trafficking that would be in line with international standards and mechanisms. However, no significant steps have been reported since then in terms of successful investigations, arrests or prosecutions of traffickers. In addition, it is still not clear how the action plan and the strategy will strengthen the Khartoum Process, as no meaningful data has been declared by the government to link its commitment to combat trafficking with actual impact.

⁴⁵ ENACT: Enhancing Africa’s capacity to respond more effectively to transnational organised crime.

Even though Sudan ratified both the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, the state has had limited success in implementing its plans and strategies to curb human trafficking. Successful implementation would require boosting the rule of law in the country, so that investigations can translate into arrests and prosecutions.”

(Source: ENACT – [Human trafficking: Is Sudan committed to fighting human trafficking?](#), 7 March 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The most recent US Department of State country report on Trafficking in Persons report covering 2023, highlighted significant gaps in victim identification, protection, legal support, and preventive measures against human trafficking in Sudan:

“PROTECTION

The government decreased already inadequate efforts to identify and protect victims. The government did not report comprehensive victim identification data. It did report identifying 12 potential trafficking victims, three men and nine women, compared with identifying 633 potential victims during the previous reporting period. Due to a dearth of training and ongoing conflation between migrant smuggling and human trafficking, the government did not always distinguish trafficking victims from other crime victims. The government did not report whether it referred any potential victims to services. The government reported it could provide food, psycho-social services, and basic medical services at two government-run shelters; however, it did not report how many victims received services. Officials reported existing shelters were in dire need of refurbishment and a dearth of trained mental health professionals to provide care to trafficking victims. The lack of shelters adversely affected the country’s ability to protect victims once identified.

For the fourth consecutive year, officials did not report disseminating or implementing child trafficking victim identification SOPs developed in 2018 in partnership with an international organization. The government did not have SOPs for victim identification and referral to care for adults. The government’s past denial of sex trafficking occurring within Sudan, coupled with authorities’ inconsistent screening of vulnerable populations, likely resulted in the arrests and detention of women whom traffickers compelled into commercial sex. The government conducted screening for child soldiers among local militia members integrating into the armed forces as part of the Juba Peace Agreement. The government identified 39 children and referred them to services. The government did not provide foreign trafficking victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they would face retribution or hardship.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. The NCCHT led the government’s anti-trafficking efforts, including implementation of the 2021-2023 NAP. The NCCHT, which included subcommittees in the states of Gedaraf, Kassala, North and West Darfur, and Northern State, convened regularly. Officials noted a lack of human and material resources – as well as a limited presence outside of the capital – hindered the NCCHT’s ability to execute its mandate. Officials noted they lacked the resources necessary to adequately investigate trafficking cases. The government reported it conducted awareness raising workshops and programs on human trafficking for civil society members. Additionally, trafficking was covered in primary and secondary school curricula. The government reported it ran a hotline but did not provide information on the hotline’s purpose or utility. Ministry of Labor inspectors were responsible for providing oversight of recruitment agencies, but they did not report investigating or sanctioning fraudulent recruiters during the reporting period. Sudan’s Domestic Workers Act of 2008 provided a legal framework for employing and registering domestic workers with limited labor rights and protections; however, the government did not report registering or protecting any domestic workers under the law during the reporting period. The government did not report providing anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel. Officials did not report efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex.

SAF officials continued to staff the Child Rights Unit (CRU) (established in 2019), which led the government’s child protection efforts in conflict areas. The government reported the CRU provided training focused on the rights of the child in conflict – including sensitization on the illegality of recruitment or use of children as soldiers – to civilian protection and military forces. The government inspected SAF units and Juba Peace Agreement signatories to ensure there were no cases of child soldier recruitment and use, but did not report inspecting Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The government reported it ceased work to finalize the military’s training manual on child rights, including child

soldier prevention and referral. The Sudanese Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to issue and disseminate command orders directing military officials to follow the government’s ban against recruiting or using individuals under 18 years of age in support or combat roles.”

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.2.2. Identification, registration, prevention, protection

Are there procedures to identify and/or protect child victims of trafficking?

In this press release, published by the OHCHR in March 2024, UN experts expressed grave concern and condemnation over human rights violations, emphasising the continuing issues despite prior warnings:

“[...]Access to support for victims and survivors has reportedly deteriorated since December 2023, eight months after the outbreak of conflict between Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in April 2023, the experts said. Young women and girls, including internally displaced persons are reportedly being trafficked for sexual slavery and other forms of sexual exploitation.

“We are appalled by reports of women and girls being sold at slave markets in areas controlled by RSF forces and other armed groups, including in North Darfur,” the experts said.

The experts also expressed concern about the increase in child, early and forced marriage, reportedly a result of family separation, and gender-based violence, including rape and unwanted pregnancies.

“Despite previous warnings to both Sudanese authorities and RSF representatives, we continue to receive reports of recruitment of children to actively participate in hostilities, including from a neighbouring country,” the experts said.

“The recruitment of children by armed groups for any form of exploitation – including in combat roles – is a gross violation of human rights, a serious crime and a violation of international humanitarian law,” they said.”

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan, Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts](#), 22 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The US DOS 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report. Although Sudan is making efforts to eliminate trafficking, it does not yet have standard procedures in place to identify or protect child victims of trafficking:

“Protection

For the fourth consecutive year, officials did not report disseminating or implementing child trafficking victim identification SOPs developed in 2018 in partnership with an international organization. The government did not have SOPs for victim identification and referral to care for adults. The government’s past denial of sex trafficking occurring within Sudan, coupled with authorities’ inconsistent screening of vulnerable populations, likely resulted in the arrests and detention of women whom traffickers compelled into commercial sex. The government conducted screening for child soldiers among local militia members integrating into the armed forces as part of the Juba Peace Agreement. The government identified 39 children and referred them to services. The government did not provide foreign trafficking victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they would face retribution or hardship.”

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Better Migration Management (BMM) program (funded by the European Union and Germany) has, since 2016, been working with the Sudanese Government in countering human trafficking and improving the protection of its victims. A recent National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking was launched in August 2021:

“Building on the previous phase

On 30 August 2021, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCT) launched the National Action Plan for Combatting Human Trafficking 2021-2023 in Khartoum.

[...]

In the framework of the National Action Plan 2017-2019, Sudanese authorities increased the number of identified victims, [...] human trafficking [...]. The new action plan aims to combat and prevent human trafficking and exploitative smuggling, especially trafficking of women and children.
[...]

Concrete measures for 2021-2023

Ms Siham Osman, Undersecretary Ministry of Justice and Head of NCCT committee expressed her satisfaction: “This action plan was developed in collaboration with all the relevant governmental institutions mandated to combat human trafficking. Throughout the development phase, the four core aspects to combating human trafficking were met: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Coordination and Partnership.”

(Source: European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa – [Sudan launched its National Action Plan to counter and prevent human trafficking](#), 30 August 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are identified victims of child trafficking registered?

In a series of written responses to questions sent by Asylos for this report, Asma Taha a Humanitarian Practitioner/Expert indicated in June 2024 that:

“There is no accurate data on identified or registered trafficking victims in Sudan, the programs working on trafficked children were always challenged by the security forces.⁴⁶”

(Source: Asma Taha, [written communication with Asylos](#), 2 June 2024)

UNHCR and IOM welcomed the creation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for 2021-2023 in this press release dated August 2021. In the context of Sudan’s ongoing conflict, displacement of millions, and governmental collapse, no information could be found on the progress, funding or implementation of the NAP, it is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence.

“The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) commend the Sudanese Government for the launch of its 2021–2023 National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Human Trafficking.

The plan, officially launched yesterday by the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCT), seeks to reinforce Sudan’s efforts to curb human trafficking and to build on the previous action plan for 2017-2019.

The new NAP, which was drafted with the support of the Counter-Trafficking and Mixed Migration Working Group (CTWG), of which UNHCR and IOM are co-chairs, has a broader scope and takes into consideration contributions from all concerned actors including officials and civil society.”

(Source: United Nations Sudan – [UNHCR and IOM welcome government new action plan to combat human trafficking in Sudan](#), 31 August 2021, last accessed 1 June 2024)

UNICEF, in its Child Notice on Sudan dated 2016, noted that:

“There is a lack of national data on child trafficking. Sources quoted in this section are mainly international ones. [...] data of any kind on human trafficking in Sudan is extremely limited. From all sources consulted, there appears to be no disaggregated information in relation to child trafficking. The TIP report, in describing the general lack of law enforcement and other data, mentioned that in 2014 the government started requesting states to report trafficking statistics. No such data has been found for this report.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Notice Sudan](#), 2016, last accessed 23 May 2024)

⁴⁶ Asma referred us to Global Partners Governance (GPG), The impact of conflict on modern slavery and human trafficking in Sudan and the region.

Do the authorities intervene against child trafficking (prevention)?

According to the U.S. State Department, Sudan adopted in 2014 an Anti-Human Trafficking Law that prescribed between five and 20 years' imprisonment for offences involving adult female and child victims:

"The Government of Sudan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. [...] For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not disseminate or implement SOPs, developed in partnership with an international organization, for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims. [...]"

The government increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The 2014 Anti-Human Trafficking Law, as amended, criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The law prescribed between three and 10 years' imprisonment for base offenses involving adult male victims and between five and 20 years' imprisonment for offenses involving adult female and child victims or involving additional aggravating circumstances [...]"

SAF officials continued to staff the Child Rights Unit (CRU) (established in 2019), which led the government's child protection efforts in conflict areas."

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is care and assistance available for victims of child trafficking in practice? What kind of care and assistance is available?

A report by Global Partners Governance, published in May 2024, explains the inadequacy of services provided to victims and survivors of trafficking. The report highlights that all service providers agree that current services do not sufficiently meet the needs of victims:

"All service providers, when asked about the quality of services and whether they sufficiently address the needs of victims and survivors, agree that they currently do not address these needs sufficiently. When questioned regarding impediments to accessing services, a significant proportion of respondents highlighted the lack of comprehensive quality in available services, which fails to adequately address the needs of trafficking victims."

A key factor in the inadequacy of service provision is the lack of available funding. All organisations we spoke to highlighted the significant funding gaps overall, compounded by the project based nature of funding. In reality, most of service providers reported that they were currently working pro bono, or without funding at all.

Respondents cited that service provision, such as safe housing, is not a priority for government institutions. The conflict has forced several NGOs to cease operations due to infrastructure damage and operational challenges. Operational organisations are currently constrained by limited resources, necessitating their operation at reduced capacity amidst escalating demand, consequently impacting the quality of services.

According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview for Sudan 'specialised GBV services, such as the clinical management of rape (CMR), psycho-social support (PSS), legal aid, case management, and referral mechanisms, are unavailable in over 61 per cent of localities in Sudan' (HNRP, 2024). The lack of specialised services was a finding that was reinforced in all our interviews, which stressed the inadequate nature of SGBV provision in particular.

'There are a number of gaps in the services provided, for example, lack of credibility, honesty, and clarity. Lack of institutionalisation, lack of justice, lack of laws that protect vulnerable people, vulnerable communities and groups, lack of their integration into development, and lack of involvement of all groups and sectors in developing plans and mechanisms for implementing them.' (KI 20, 2024)

Overall, there is a general agreement with all KI respondents that the services available do not sufficiently address the needs of victims of trafficking and therefore cannot support their protection. This applies across both international and domestic providers.”

(Source: Reliefweb, Global Partners Governance (GPG) – [The impact of conflict on modern slavery and human trafficking in Sudan and the region](#), 24 May 2024, pg. 10, last accessed 3 June 2024)

According to the U.S. State Department, Sudan has neither disseminated nor implemented SOPs developed in partnership with an international NGO concerning the identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims:

“The Government of Sudan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. [...] For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not disseminate or implement SOPs, developed in partnership with an international organization, for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure all identified trafficking victims are referred to appropriate protective services.
- Increase training for security and judicial officials on distinguishing human trafficking from other crimes such as migrant smuggling and kidnapping for ransom.
- Ensure authorities do not inappropriately penalize trafficking victims for crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute traffickers, including complicit officials in forced recruitment or use of child soldiers, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Coordinate with civil society and international organizations to disseminate and implement SOPs for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims and develop SOPs for adult trafficking victims.
- Provide sufficient staff and resources to the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT).
- Implement and dedicate adequate resources to the 2021-2023 national anti-trafficking action plan. Partner with civil society, international organizations, and the private sector to establish additional shelter options for trafficking victims.
- Develop a data collection and information management system in collaboration with international organizations to more effectively organize law enforcement data.
- Draft and finalize a standalone smuggling law to enhance judicial officials’ ability to prosecute migrant smuggling crimes separate from human trafficking crimes.”

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.2.3. Trafficking situation

Is child trafficking taking place? What are the patterns relating to the exploitation and trafficking of children in Sudan?

A report by Global Partners Governance, published in May 2024, describes how the ongoing conflict in Sudan has severely exacerbated existing vulnerabilities to modern slavery and human trafficking:

“Before the conflict, numerous forms of trafficking existed in Sudan, which varied between the different regions and demographics. They include early and forced marriage, forced labour, child labour and forced begging. Displaced populations and refugees were particularly vulnerable. The current conflict is expected to increase the risks of

trafficking, since armed conflicts amplify the social and economic vulnerabilities of the people affected. In previous conflicts in the region, the most reported forms of trafficking included sexual slavery, recruitment of children into armed groups, forced labour, forced begging, and forced marriages.” (pg. 1)

(Source: Reliefweb, Global Partners Governance (GPG) – [The impact of conflict on modern slavery and human trafficking in Sudan and the region](#), 24 May 2024)

In this press release UN experts expressed alarm about increasing reports of trafficking in persons,

“[...]especially women and girls, for purposes of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery, child and forced marriage, and the recruitment of boys for participation in hostilities in Sudan, against the backdrop of the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the country that has caused an unprecedented mass displacement of over 9 million people.

Access to support for victims and survivors has reportedly deteriorated since December 2023, eight months after the outbreak of conflict between Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in April 2023, the experts said. Young women and girls, including internally displaced persons are reportedly being trafficked for sexual slavery and other forms of sexual exploitation.

“We are appalled by reports of women and girls being sold at slave markets in areas controlled by RSF forces and other armed groups, including in North Darfur,” the experts said.

The experts also expressed concern about the increase in child, early and forced marriage, reportedly a result of family separation, and gender-based violence, including rape and unwanted pregnancies.

“Despite previous warnings to both Sudanese authorities and RSF representatives, we continue to receive reports of recruitment of children to actively participate in hostilities, including from a neighbouring country,” the experts said.

“The recruitment of children by armed groups for any form of exploitation – including in combat roles – is a gross violation of human rights, a serious crime and a violation of international humanitarian law,” they said.

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan, Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts](#), 22 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

US DOS in its 2023 Trafficking In Persons report describes the situation of human trafficking in Sudan, highlighting both domestic and foreign victims:

“As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Sudan, and traffickers exploit victims from Sudan at home and abroad. Traffickers exploit homeless children in Khartoum – including Sudanese and unaccompanied migrant children from West and Central Africa – in forced labor for begging, market vending, and in sex trafficking. Business owners, informal mining operators, community members, and farmers exploit children working in brick-making factories, gold mining, collecting medical waste, street vending, and agriculture; victims endure threats, physical and sexual abuse, as well as hazardous working conditions with limited access to education or health services. Criminal groups exploit Sudanese women and girls – particularly IDPs or those from rural areas – in domestic work and in sex trafficking.”

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023,, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNHCR reference young women and girls exposed to sexual violence in this report:

“[...]Adolescent girls, particularly those who are homeless or living on the streets, as well as those who have departed from traditional religious institutions (khalwas) in Kordofan, face unique challenges. Many of these children, originating from conflict-affected regions such as Darfur, are exposed to an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence and other associated dangers.[...]Local actors on the ground have identified grave violations, including killings, maiming, and alleged recruitment of children into armed forces/groups, rape and other sexual violence, abductions and kidnappings, attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as killings and injuries of children as highlighted under Risk[...].”

(Source: Reliefweb: UNHCR – [Sudan Protection Analysis Update: Unabated violations against civilians increase the impact of protection risks on the population](#), 10 August 2023, pg. 8, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UN Security Council, reference exploitation of girls in Sudan:

“[...] recent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are deeply concerning. In 2022, the United Nations documented 96 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including abductions, attempted rape and gang rape, affecting 63 women and 33 girls. The majority of victims were displaced women and girls who were often attacked while leaving camps in order to attend school or engage in essential livelihood activities. The perpetrators included armed nomads and other unknown armed men. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces were also implicated [...]”

“Numerous allegations of sexual violence arose in the context of protests against the military takeover. In 2022, the United Nations documented attacks, including gang rape, rape and attempted rape, against 24 victims, including women, men and boys, during or after protests. The police, including the Central Reserve Police, were implicated in six incidents; the others were attributed to members of other security forces (Sudanese Police Force, Sudanese Armed Forces, Rapid Support Forces and General Intelligence Service). In two incidents, protesters seeking refuge from a violent crowd dispersal by the security forces were pursued and sexually assaulted. Incidents of sexual violence took place during interrogation by the joint security forces, as well as in detention settings. Owing to the fear of reprisals and a lack of trust in the justice system, only eight of the victims lodged official complaints. The authorities established a committee, headed by a public prosecutor, to investigate human rights violations committed since the military takeover. [...]”

(Source: Reliefweb, UN Security Council – [Conflict-related sexual violence – Report of the Secretary-General \(S/2023/413\)](#), 14 July 2023, pg. 21, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The New Humanitarian reports cases of sexual violence and exploitation in Khartoum, Sudan:

“According to Sulima Ishaq, the director of a government unit tasked with combating violence against women[...] They are mostly young women and girls, between the ages of 12-28. Sexual violence is being used as a tool to get civilians to leave their houses. There is also the exploitation of young girls who come from impoverished families and are residing in rich neighbourhoods. They are mostly from African ethnicities.

The [video that was published by CNN](#) was among the cases where young girls aged 15, 16, or even younger have been sexually exploited and raped by more than three soldiers. Those young girls are minors, and their vulnerability against armed ruthless soldiers doesn’t give them the capacity to provide consent. It is sexual exploitation and rape.”

(Source: The New Humanitarian – [Q&A: The civil servant documenting sexual violence in Sudan’s conflict](#), 26 June 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is the sale of children taking place?

In this press release, dated March 2024, UN experts expressed that:

““We are appalled by reports of women and girls being sold at slave markets in areas controlled by RSF forces and other armed groups, including in North Darfur,” the experts said.”

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan, Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts](#), 22 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided the following context:

“I have heard very numerous reports that this is so, that girls are being sold in markets.⁴⁷ There’s one market actually in Khartoum. If you want to buy a girl, you may do so here. Abductions of children have been commonplace

⁴⁷ Asharq Al-Awsat, [A Travesty of The War in Sudan: The Trafficking of Women](#), 2 February 2024

since the beginning of the genocide. [...] Slavery, of course, is the ultimate form of trafficking. And cattle slavery existed in Sudan right up to the end of the North-South Civil War. [...] But slavery was a huge, huge problem and goes back centuries. Slavery in the Arab world is much older than slavery in the Western Hemisphere. Goes back many centuries. And it was institutionalised. There were slave traders who would go down on a special train through Babanussa to Bahr el Ghazal, get as many slaves as they could gather onto the train and go back to Khartoum, where they would be sold. That's [the] context, I think, for understanding the attitude towards trafficking in children. It's not as bad as slavery. Well, in fact, it is, but it's called child trafficking now. If a girl is sold to a man or group of men who intend to use her only for sexual purposes, no matter how long it is, she's sexually enslaved."

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

The African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported that:

"Suicide to End Suffering

[...]

According to the eyewitness (Hassan), three girls were offered for sale in the Kufut market after being brought from Damra Qanjar, which is on the way to Abu Sukkin, northwest of Al-Fashir city, for a price of 450,000 each on June 30, 2020. However, the matter was met with great disapproval in the market, forcing the kidnappers to return them to Damrah Qanjar. It was also added that they were kidnapped from Khartoum State."

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam, January 2024](#), pg. 8, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How many children are victims of human trafficking (disaggregated by sex) and under what circumstances?

In this press release dated February 2024, OHCHR noted that:

"Twenty million Sudanese children are reportedly not attending school, and exposed to the risk of sale, sexual abuse, exploitation, family separation, abduction, trafficking and recruitment and use by armed groups."

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan: 25 million people in dire humanitarian need, say UN experts](#), 05 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported that:

"Kidnappers and Feeling of Guiltiness

On the other hand, Umm Al-Naim, a woman living in Damarah Shurfa, 60 kilometers southwest of Al-Fashir, confirmed the involvement of two of her sons and others in the ranks of the RSF in kidnapping eight girls from the battles in Khartoum in May 2023. They are now being used as sex workers with a number of devastations, including a heart and a cave on a balcony in the area of Kolki, west of Al-Fashir in North Darfur. She also revealed that Damrah Qab and the municipality of Dar Al-Salam have become a crossing point for abducting girls and taking them to different areas. Um Al-Naim called on the Rapid Support Command to intervene to rescue the kidnapped girls, expressing her sorrow, and revealed that the current war and the various violations resulting from the right conscience are unacceptable.

On the other hand, a number of eyewitnesses from the city of Kabkabiya, 136 kilometers west of Al-Fasher, the capital of the state of North Darfur, revealed the emergence of more than 20 abductees, some of whom were deported to the area of Ghara Al-Zawiya between Kabkabkabiya and Saraf Umra, and some of them remained in the village mosque until mid-June 2023, after some of the families of the kidnappers refused this phenomenon in the hope that putting them in the village mosque would help save them with the intervention of some good people. The source suggested that these girls were kidnapped from Khartoum."

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam, January 2024](#), pp. 7-8, last accessed 23 May 2024)

OCHA in this situation report covering June 2023, reported that:

“Women cited the risk of gender-based violence as a reason for their flight from Sudan, and concerns for their personal safety and that of their children. Adolescent girls are also facing an increased risk of child marriage as some families are allegedly resorting to it, in an attempt to “shield” them from further risks of sexual violence, assault or exploitation. Smuggling and human trafficking risks are on the rise, according to UNHCR, partially due to the lack of alternative opportunities to reach the border, the urgency of people to escape insecurity and deprivation, forcing them to resort to taking dangerous routes. The presence of armed actors as well as shortage of basic resources — including water, food, and fuel— continue to exacerbate the risk of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. While long periods trapped within homes due to fighting increases incidents of intimate partner and domestic violence.”

(Source: Reliefweb, OCHA – [Sudan Situation Report](#), 22 June 2023, pg. 3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Which types of exploitation do victims of child trafficking face and how/where/under what circumstances were these children recruited by traffickers?

OHCHR reported that:

“We have received alarming reports of [...] trafficking of children for purposes of recruitment, [...] in Sudan, including conflict-related sexual violence and rape against children and[....], trafficking for purposes of sexual slavery, [...].”

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan: 25 million people in dire humanitarian need, say UN experts](#), 05 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The 2023 US Department of State (USDOS) Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan, reported on the profiles of children and refugees that traffickers exploit in Sudan:

“Trafficking Profile:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Sudan, and traffickers exploit victims from Sudan at home and abroad. Traffickers exploit homeless children in Khartoum – including Sudanese and unaccompanied migrant children from West and Central Africa – in forced labor for begging, market vending, and in sex trafficking. Business owners, informal mining operators, community members, and farmers exploit children working in brick-making factories, gold mining, collecting medical waste, street vending, and agriculture; victims endure threats, physical and sexual abuse, as well as hazardous working conditions with limited access to education or health services. Criminal groups exploit Sudanese women and girls – particularly IDPs or those from rural areas – in domestic work and in sex trafficking.

Due to regional instability and conflict, there are more than 3.7 million IDPs and 1.1 million refugees in Sudan – populations with increased vulnerability to human trafficking. Observers reported armed groups forcibly recruited Ethiopians in refugee camps in Eastern Sudan. Observers reported concerns that government officials from the Commission of Refugees and General Intelligence Service were potentially sexually exploiting refugees – including newly arrived Ethiopians – in Sudan. Additionally, due to the government’s refugee encampment policy which restricts refugees from moving freely within the country, some refugees utilized migrant smugglers inside Sudan, which further increased their risk of exploitation. Additionally, reports alleged corrupt RSF officials financially benefited from their role as border guards and took a direct role in human trafficking. In past years, the non-governmental armed groups Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) al-Hilu and SPLM-N Malak Aga conscripted child soldiers from refugee camps in South Sudan and brought them into Sudan. The Sudanese Alliance recruited and used child soldiers in Darfur. An international organization reported there were at least 300 child soldiers in Darfur being used by unidentified armed groups.” [...]

[...] “Sudanese traffickers compel Ethiopian women to work in private homes in Khartoum and other urban centers. Well-organized and cross-border criminal syndicates force some Ethiopian women into commercial sex in Khartoum by manipulating debts and other forms of coercion. Attempting to escape conflict and poverty, many East African victims of trafficking initially seek out the services of migrant smugglers, who coerce the migrants into forced labor or sex trafficking. Egyptian government forces allegedly exploit some Sudanese migrants in forced labor in Egypt. Sudanese transiting the Sinai on their way to Israel are at risk of kidnapping and exploitation by Bedouins and at further risk of trafficking when they arrive in Israel.”

[...] “Darfuri armed groups exploit some migrants in forced labor or sex trafficking. Smugglers linked to the Rashaida and Tabo tribes abduct Eritrean nationals at border crossings, extort them for ransom, and subject them to abuse, including trafficking. Other cross-border tribes also force abductees to perform domestic or manual labor, and abuse them in other ways, including exploiting them in forced labor or sex trafficking”

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023,, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In a report dated 17 August 2020, OHCHR, expressed alarm over the widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan:

“[...] women and girls have been subjected to enforced disappearance and acts tantamount thereto, forced to work, and sexually exploited. Reportedly, hundreds of women have been detained by the RSF, held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery.

“Sudanese women and girls in urban centers as well as in Darfur have been particularly vulnerable to violence. The lives and safety of migrant and refugee women and girls, primarily from Eritrea and South Sudan, have also been seriously affected,” they said [UN experts].”

“It is alleged that men identified as members of the RSF are using rape and sexual violence of women and girls as tools to punish and terrorise communities. Some of the reported rapes appear to be ethnically and racially motivated,” the experts said.”

(Source: OHCHR – [UN experts alarmed by the reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by RSF in Sudan](#), 17 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports on possible complicity of parents, other family members or caregivers in arranging or consenting to the trafficking?

On 16 October 2023, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Sudan raised concerns about the ongoing recruitment of children by armed forces in the region:

“GENEVA (16 October 2023) – A UN expert today expressed concern about the increased risk of recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) earlier this year.

“Unaccompanied children and children from poor families are allegedly targeted by RSF in the outskirts of Khartoum, as well as in Darfur and West Kordofan, for recruitment into combat roles,” said Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Girls have also reportedly been abducted from Khartoum to Darfur for sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery. “The deteriorating humanitarian situation and lack of access to food and other basic services make children, especially unaccompanied and separated children on the streets, easy targets for recruitment by armed groups,” Mullally said.

Responding to claims that children may join armed groups as a survival strategy, the Special Rapporteur recalled that the consent of a child (defined as any person under the age of 18) is legally irrelevant and that it is unnecessary to prove the use of force. “The recruitment of children by armed groups for any form of exploitation – including in combat roles – is a gross violation of human rights, a serious crime and a violation of international humanitarian law,” she said.”

(Source: United Nations OHCHR – [Sudan: UN expert warns of child recruitment by armed forces](#), 16 October 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports of child victims of trafficking being placed in debt bondage?

In this news article dated March 2024, CNN details the forced recruitment and exploitation of Sudanese children. Whilst the report does not specifically address debt bondage, it provides important context on human trafficking in the current situation in Sudan:

“[...] Mohamed Badawi, a lawyer with the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies, told CNN that the RSF’s coercive and violent tactics were akin to an “enforced labor system.” “People need to survive – they have no other choice, no one to complain to. If you don’t kill for them, you will be arrested,” he said of the RSF’s methods. “Reports of the RSF forcing Sudanese men and children to join their ranks through intimidation, torture, and the withholding of food and aid are deplorable. [...]” said US Special Envoy for Sudan Tom Perriello [...] Children are especially vulnerable to RSF exploitation, Al Karib said, and their recruitment will make any future demobilization process more difficult. CNN shared its findings with UN special rapporteur for contemporary slavery Tomoya Obokata, who said, “the recruitment of young men and children in exchange for food and safety amounts to forced labour, the worst form in the cases of children, and amounts to contemporary slavery under international law.” After nearly a year of war, UN children’s agency UNICEF estimates that about 19 million Sudanese children are out of school. While several videos from across Sudan showing RSF child soldiers have been posted on social media since the beginning of the war, CNN has now been able to confirm the recruitment of 65 of them in Jazira since mid-December, with each report independently corroborated by locals from the villages concerned. Similar reports have emerged from other parts of the country; CNN has been able to confirm a handful of cases in Omdurman and Khartoum.”

(Source: CNN – [‘Enlist or die’: Fear, looming famine and a deadly ultimatum swell the ranks of Sudan’s paramilitary forces](#), 21 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In its Country policy and information note: humanitarian situation on Sudan, the UK Home Office, noted that:

“Multiple sources have highlighted the impact of the current socioeconomic situation on child forced labour, trafficking and forced recruitment. On 2 September 2023 Arab News reported that ‘Child soldiers are being recruited by both sides in Sudan’s ongoing civil war’. The report quoted a journalist based in Nyala town Darfur saying: ‘Severe and widespread poverty has driven many children into the arms of the militias.’³⁴ UNHCR reported in June 2023: ‘In the current disrupted socio-economic situation, the risk of neglect and exploitation of children is on the rise. Deprived from family attention and care, children are even more at risk of being induced into forced labour, recruited into armed groups and even trafficked, especially in East Sudan.’³⁵”

³⁴ Arab News, [‘Sudan conflict poses threat of long-term societal harm as ...’](#), 2 September 2023

³⁵ UNHCR, [‘Protection Brief Sudan, June 2023’](#), 4 June 2023

(Source: UK Home Office – [Country policy and information note: humanitarian situation, Sudan, February 2024](#), updated March 2024, pp. 14, para 7.3.3., last accessed 23 May 2024)

The 2023 Global Organized Crime Index by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime provides an analysis of the state and impact of organised crime in Sudan, whilst the report does not specifically address debt bondage in regards to co children, it does provide relevant information that debt bondage is taking place in Sudan:

“PEOPLE

[...]Victims are primarily women, who are forced into domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, debt bondage, agriculture and prostitution. Homeless children in Khartoum are coerced into sex trafficking and forced labour. [...]”

(Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime – [Global Organized Crime Index: Sudan](#), 2023, pg. 3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.3. Children in armed conflict

8.3.1. Legislation and application

Did Sudan ratify the optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and is it applied in practice?

According to the United Nations Treaty Collection, Sudan signed the optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 9 May 2002 and ratified it on 26 July 2005.

(Source: UNTC – [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

However, violation of the protocol has been well documented by the General Assembly Security Council in a report published June 2022:

“The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2021, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2427 (2018). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions.¹ Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,² and the abduction of children.

The United Nations verified 202 grave violations against 195 children (137 boys, 57 girls, 1 sex unknown) in the Sudan, including one girl who was the victim of multiple violations. In addition, 8 violations against 4 children (2 boys, 2 girls) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021. A total of 11 children (8 boys, 3 girls), some as young as 11, were verified as having been recruited and used by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army Transitional Council (SLM/A-TC) (8), the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid splinter group led by Ali Hamid “Shakush” (2) and the Sudanese Alliance (1) in Central Darfur (10) and West Darfur (1). The earlier recruitment of one girl by the Justice and Equality Movement was verified in 2021. The killing (54) and maiming (112) of 166 children (128 boys, 37 girls, 1 sex unknown) was attributed to government security forces (27) (Sudanese Armed Forces (26) and Rapid Support Forces (1)); and unidentified perpetrators (139), including due to crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and armed groups, intercommunal violence (83) and explosive remnants of war (41).”

¹ See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in Colombia ([S/2021/1022](#)), the Central African Republic ([S/2021/882](#)), Yemen ([S/2021/761](#)), Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)), the Syrian Arab Republic ([S/2021/398](#)), and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/49/58](#)).

² For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.

(Source: General Assembly Security Council – [Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General](#), 23 June 2022)

What is the legal age of (forced and voluntary) recruitment in the armed forces and is it enforced?

In its review dated 28 February 2007, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada presents varied information on Sudan’s military conscription age:

“Information on the age of conscription for military service varied among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. According to the *Europa World Year Book 2006* and the United States (US) Central Intelligence Agency

(CIA) World Factbook, persons between the ages of 18 to 30 years are liable for national military service (*Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4095; US 8 Feb. 2007). However, the *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004* indicates that under Sudan's National Service Act of 1992, persons between the ages of 18 to 33 years must submit to national military service (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004; Denmark 2001, 68). The report also indicates that the compulsory recruitment age is 17 years for the regular armed forces and 16 years for the paramilitary Popular Defence Force (PDF), while there is no minimum age for the reserve forces and for persons volunteering in the regular armed forces (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005 indicates that persons aged 17 to 19 were required to undergo military service (8 Mar. 2006, Sec.5).

News and human rights sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that the Sudanese government is also believed to recruit children for military training (UN 2 Feb. 2007; *ibid.* 17 Aug. 2006; *ibid.* 1 July 2005; US 8 Mar. 2006; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 17 Nov. 2004)."

(Source: Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada – [Sudan: Military service including age of conscription, gender, length of service, recruitment practices and training, exemption conditions and alternative service options, penalties for refusing military service, and treatment of family members of those who refuse military service \(2001-2007\)](#), 28 February 2007, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Does the state have a policy in place to prevent and counter underage recruitment?

On its webpage, the ICRC outlines the issue of child recruitment in armed conflicts within Sudan:

"The case in brief

Armed conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region began in 2003. It was widely reported that parties to the conflict, including the government of Sudan and various non-state armed groups, among them the Justice and Equality Movement Sudan (JEM), recruited children to their fighting forces.

Sudan is a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict since 2005. Pursuant to Art. 3(2) of the Optional Protocol, the government declared a minimum recruitment age into the Sudan armed forces of 18. The Protocol includes obligations regarding demobilization and reintegration of children who have been unlawfully recruited.

In 2013 the government and the JEM signed a ceasefire agreement including commitments to protect children. Further to this agreement, in 2016 the government of Sudan signed an Action Plan with the United Nations (UN) to prevent the recruitment and use of children by its security forces. A first group of children was released within months."

(Source: ICRC – [Tackling the recruitment and use of children in Sudan: 2013–2016](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Within the framework of the UN Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict has an action plan be signed by the government or non-state entity to end recruitment and use of Children?

In March 2016, The United Nations in Sudan, represented by Bintou Keita, Marta Ruedas, and Geert Cappelaere, expressed readiness to support Sudan's implementation to prevent the recruitment and use of children by Sudan:

"[...] In an important milestone for the protection of children in Sudan, the Government signed an Action Plan with the United Nations to prevent the recruitment and use of children by Sudan Government Security Forces. [...]"

"We will work to promote and protect children's rights in areas of armed conflict and displacement. We are also committed to strengthen existing mechanisms that are included in the Child Act of 2010 and the Sudan Armed Forces law," said His Excellency Ibrahim Adm Ibrahim, State Minister of Social Welfare.

The State Minister of Social Welfare signed the Action Plan on behalf of the Sudanese Government in a high-level ceremony presided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and attended by cabinet ministers to highlight the Government's determination to turn the page on the recruitment and use of children.

"The United Nations in Sudan stands ready to support every step of the implementation of this Action Plan," declared the three co-chairs of the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, Bintou Keita, Deputy Joint Special Representative for the African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur, Marta Ruedas, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Representative."

(Source: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict – [Sudan Signs Action Plan to Protect Children from Violations in Armed Conflict](#), 27 March 2016, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The transitional authorities in Sudan, with United Nations agencies, had agreed to strengthen the protection of children against recruitment and use as soldiers. This collaboration is based on the 2016 action plan in the above excerpt:

"Developments and concerns

182. I welcome the collaboration between the transitional authorities and the United Nations to strengthen the protection of children, resulting in the joint commitment by the transitional authorities and signatories to the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan to a road map based on the 2016 action plan on ending and preventing child recruitment and use, and I call for the endorsement of the road map.

183. I reiterate my call upon the transitional authorities to engage with the United Nations on a longer-term national prevention plan to prevent all grave violations and sustain the gains of the 2016 action plan. I welcome the use of child rights and human rights units within the government security forces to address grave violations. I encourage the Juba Peace Agreement signatories to ensure their child protection focal points are embedded in these units. I encourage the transitional Government to continue to engage with the United Nations on ending and preventing grave violations within the framework of the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee.

184. I am concerned about the stalled implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, uncertainties surrounding the Sudanese transition following the military coup of 25 October 2021, rising intercommunal tensions in the Sudan, particularly in Darfur, and ongoing access restrictions to conflict-affected areas. I urge all parties to conflict to enable unhindered and safe access for the United Nations and humanitarian partners to conflict-affected population.

185. I call upon the transitional authorities and security forces to refrain from the excessive use of force against children and to cease the military use of schools and hospitals. I urge the transitional Government to investigate all allegations of violations, including in the context of civil unrest, and to hold perpetrators accountable. I am concerned about ongoing violations, particularly the killing and maiming of children and the perpetration of sexual violence against them.

186. I call upon all parties to cease and prevent all grave violations against children. I urge the transitional authorities to ensure the safety of and access for mine action operations. I urge all parties to release associated children and hand them over to reintegration actors in accordance with the national framework on children affected by armed conflict."

(Source: General Assembly Security Council – [Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General](#), 23 June 2022, pp. 24-45, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report by the US Department of State, The Government of Sudan:

"[...] does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity, if any; therefore Sudan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions; identifying child trafficking victims among militia members; and providing training on the illegality of recruitment or use of children as soldiers in civilian protection and military forces. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Insecurity hindered Sudan's ability to accurately report on anti-trafficking efforts for this reporting period. Authorities continued to conflate human trafficking with migrant smuggling, hindering law enforcement efforts. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not disseminate or implement SOPs, developed in partnership

with an international organization, for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims. The government has yet to investigate or prosecute any officials for forced recruitment or use of child soldiers.”

(Source: US DOS, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons – [Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023,, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.3.2. Situation

Are children involved in armed conflicts (regional/national)? Does under-age recruitment for fighting take place? Does recruitment of children for sexual services or forced marriage with the military take place? Do other forms of direct or indirect participation in hostilities take place?

The New Arab reported on the increase in the use of child recruitment by Sudanese forces:

“Dr Abdullah [General Secretary of the National Council for the Protection of Childhood] says that there has been an uptick in the pace of child recruitment by the RSF, with 200 documented cases of children being recruited since mid-April 2023 when war broke out between the army and the RSF.

Photos and video clips on social media sites appear to reveal minors within RSF ranks, including on the militia’s own account on the X social media platform. [...]

Two officers in Sudan’s military intelligence (who spoke on condition of anonymity) said the number of child recruits in the RSF is estimated at between 8,000-10,000 children.”

(Source: The New Arab – [Are the RSF recruiting children to fight in Sudan’s war?](#), 28 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The New Arab further evidenced witness reports of the use of child soldiers by Sudanese forces:

“Omar Abdurahman was fleeing Khartoum on a bus, heading to Northern State at the end of July, when the bus was stopped at an RSF checkpoint. He says there were child soldiers at the checkpoint, and he heard one of them asking his commander if he could kill one of the IDPs (internally displaced people).

Abdurahman, who comes from Al Kalakla Al Qubba, a neighbourhood in southwest Khartoum, said: “I have never seen children with such bloodlust in my life. They terrified the travellers, and had it not been for God’s providence and the intervention of older officers at that point, all of us would have been exterminated”.

Amal al-Mahi, who is in her sixties, also believes she witnessed child soldiers at an RSF checkpoint when fleeing Khartoum for the River Nile State in north Sudan at the start of May.

“Their weapons were longer than them,” she remarked, adding “I’m a teacher and I am almost certain that three of the RSF soldiers who boarded the bus to do the inspection were still in basic education.”

(Source: The New Arab – [Are the RSF recruiting children to fight in Sudan’s war?](#), 28 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 noted that:

“Another thing that also might face the children is the issue of child recruitment in armed groups, and this is one of those. No one is touching them now because [...] it’s a war, and bringing such things is going to cause trouble. But it is going to be very serious very soon, where you see many children being involved in armed groups as child soldiers.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In an interview we conducted in February 2024 with Ramona Padurean an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, explained the situation of children involved in armed conflicts as follows:

“I would say the risk of recruitment is way more prevalent in Darfur, based on the reports established by child protection agencies and their contribution in the working groups, compared to other places, [...] risk of being perceived as affiliated with a fighting group as a youth, even though you may not be. So those are also quite prevalent and are quite consistently reported in Darfur.

[...] for example, girls would also be at risk of being recruited for fighting, even if it’s not as active fighters, but as, let’s say, well, supporting with all sorts of documented things from preparing meals to catering to [the] needs of the fighters and so on.”

(Source: Ramona Padurean, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Her colleague and Advocacy Officer Mathilde Vu added:

“[...] Reports of forced recruitment of children. At the moment, it’s very true. I’m not sure whether it is along ethnic lines or targeting a particular ethnicity. We believe that the RSF is mobilising along its tribal lineage but they’re also going way further than that. So beyond the usual tribe, it’s very much linked to— as Ramona said, it’s basically depending on the territory that they control then they would enforce recruitment on basically the population that is there, and that includes children. And there’s been two reports, media this time, highlighting the number of, yeah, underage soldiers.⁴⁸”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

The Telegraph has also reported on children being armed with weapons and used to fight in the ongoing conflict:

“Sudan’s military has begun arming children as the conflict teeters on the brink of all-out civil war, sources have told the Telegraph.

Boys, perhaps as young as ten, have recently been handed automatic rifles in the country’s River Nile state.

After being handed 300 bullets each, they were told by an army officer: “We want you to kill 300 fighters” and warned “not to waste” the ammunition.

“In many instances, you see very young boys being given weapons,” said Dr Suliman Baldo, a leading human rights expert at the Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker.

“You’re basically turning them into cannon fodder. They are being sent as a sacrifice for nothing.”

(Source: The Telegraph – [Sudan’s military ‘arms child soldiers’ as country inches towards civil war](#), 20 January 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported that:

“Women are Victims of Sexual Violence in Sudan’s wars

In recent history, there has been a strong sense of solidarity among the first wives in Sudan with the abducted women who were taken as sexual slaves or second wives.[...]”

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam](#), January 2024 pg. 9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In another report, the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies condemned the use of child soldiers in armed forces, particularly the instance in November 2023 where 66 children were detained and used as pawns by the RSF against the SAF:

⁴⁸ UNICEF, Sudan: [UN expert warns of child recruitment by armed forces](#), 16 October 2023; Sudan Post, [Investigative | The plight of Sudanese children in the ongoing conflict](#), 24 January 2024; Al Jazeera, Sudan’s war/RSF & SAF recruit children, 14 January 2024; and Sudan War Monitor, [Full Text: UN Panel of Experts Report on Sudan](#), 23, January 2024

“African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) strongly condemns the violations against children by both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied militia in Sudan. In this release, ACJPS has documented an incident where 66 children were arrested in West Darfur by the RSF amidst allegations of recruitment of child soldiers into the armed conflict.

The children, aged between 14 to 16-years-old were arrested on 6,7 and 8 November 2023 following the seizure of the SAF military base (15th Division) in West Darfur after the RSF launched an attack on it. They were arrested from the neighboring areas including Ardmata IDP camp, Alezaa and Aljazeera neighborhoods. The children were taken to the former joint Sudanese-Chadian Forces base which was seized by RSF on 15 April 2023 where they remain detained.

On 15 November 2023, the RSF published a videoclip on social media showing several children “testifying” that they had been recruited by the Sudanese Army as soldiers. Mr. Abdul Monim Alrabi, an RSF blogger (originally from South Darfur and a former National Congress Party affiliate) also appeared in the video questioning the children and asking them to name the SAF soldier(s) who recruited them. The children named Mr. Waleed Gism Alsayed, as the chief recruiter. Earlier, on 5 November 2023, in another video, Mr. Waleed Gism is seen in handcuffs walking towards a land cruiser vehicle being led by two RSF members. When he was asked about how he is being treated by RSF, his answer was “It will be okay”.

A Reliable source informed ACJPS that one of the reasons for the arrests of the children was to film the above-mentioned video as the children were coerced and manipulated into accusing SAF of recruiting them. The reliable source also accused RSF of paying some of the children a sum of 500,000 Sudanese Pounds (approximately 450 US Dollars) for them to make the false accusations. Another reliable source informed ACJPS that at least nine of the children were released after the video had been published and that they had been cautioned and threatened not to disclose what had happened. However, the remaining children are still in RSF’s custody.

In non-related development, the Sudanese Armed Forces in Elfashir, North Darfur allegedly rejected over 60 children who had volunteered to join the army. A reliable source (human rights defender from Elfashir) informed ACJPS that the children who were at a SAF training center were sent back home because they were below 18 years of age.

[...]Since the war erupted, hundreds of children have been recruited in the conflict by both parties thus exposing them to both physical and psychological harm. Although the RSF and its allied militia account for most of these violations, government forces have also been accused of the same. This is a clear violation of Sudan’s international obligations.”

(Source: African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies – [Sudan: Sixty-Six Children detained and used as pawns by RSF against SAF](#), 12 January 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In what way are children recruited and by which group(s)?

The New Arab reported that tribal customs are being exploited to force children to join armed groups:

“The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan are reportedly recruiting children to fight in their battle against the Sudanese army, exploiting tribal customs in its power base in Darfur after the phenomenon- which had accompanied the group’s establishment in 2003- had declined.

Umm Kulthum Mohamed (a pseudonym for security concerns) has lived in constant fear since her 15-year-old brother left to join the RSF in June 2023. The family have had no news of him until now.

“Our neighbour- the sheikh of the tribe in Daein city (the capital of East Darfur state) convinced my father that his son Faris had to take part with his brother and fight with the RSF,” she explained to Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, The New Arab’s Arabic-language sister edition.

“Since my brother left to fight with the RSF no one has told me anything about him, and we don’t know whether he is alive or dead”.

To recruit Darfuri children to fight with them against the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the RSF exploits the ancient “faza’a” custom widespread among the Sudanese tribes, explains Dr Abdul Qader Abdullah, General Secretary of the National Council for the Protection of Childhood.

Faza’a is an ancient tradition with pre-Islamic roots, one aspect of which is where tribes call on their people and allies to support them in the face of attacks by other tribes or to take revenge for killings.”

(Source: The New Arab – [Are the RSF recruiting children to fight in Sudan’s war?](#), 28 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The African Centre for Peace and Justice Studies evidence testimonies of children who have been recruited by the Sudanese forces:

“One Mohamed (not real name) aged 15 years old from the Al-Wehda neighborhood in Nyala was interviewed. Mr. Mohamed informed ACJPS that he joined RSF through an officer known as Sadam Mohamed Yagoup Al-Nazir a Major ranking officer in mid-June 2023. “I was appointed as an RSF Military Intelligence personnel tasked to monitor and report about other RSF officers and affiliates/collaborators. I was given a gun and a cellular communication device. I participated in the gunfights in October 2023 after which I absconded/quit for a short time and later re-joined after RSF seized and took control of the SAF headquarters also known as Division 16 on 26 October 2023. Currently, we (approximately 100 recruits) are undergoing training at the SAF gardens in Nyala,” Mohamed disclosed. There was no mention of payment during the conversation.

Mr. Ali (not real name) aged 17 years old from the Al-Andlus neighborhood in Nyala, South Darfur State had this to say to ACJPS “I joined the Rapid Support Forces on 28 October 2023 through an RSF official called Mohamed Zain. I joined together with approximately 200 others majority of whom are children. After we had been recruited, we started training every morning for at least two hours at the SAF headquarters in Nyala that RSF seized on 26 October 2023. Only the groups that had joined earlier were allowed to carry weapons because they had been trained on how to operate them unlike, we the new recruits. We were also informed that those groups had participated in the gun battle that led to the capture of Division 16. On 31 October 2023, three child soldiers from our group were killed in Zalingei. We were promised two months’ pay but we are yet to be paid”

Mr. Abdallah (not real name) aged 17 years old from the Kabra area of Central Darfur State narrated his experience to ACJPS “I joined RSF on 4 July 2023 because I was looking for a way to make a living after the outbreak of the armed conflict which disrupted my sources of income. The recruitment and registration process were supervised by one of the tribal leaders and a Sheikh called Mr. Ajeeb who is a tribal leader. I was trained and I am now able to use and operate an automatic gun. During the training, we were told that the money from all the banks in Nyala had been transferred to SAF headquarters and that we had to fight to get that it. However, in September, I quit because I could not fight anymore,”

Mr. Hasan (not real name) aged 16 years old from Kas locality located East of Nyala in South Darfur, told ACJPS that “sometime in August 2023, I decided to join RSF. I went and registered through an officer called Mr. Abdallah Idris also known as Bata. Mr. Bata is also a community leader and Mayor. We participated in several attacks in Nyala after we had been trained on how to use automatic guns known as Kalashnikovs. During these attacks, we lost several colleagues. We were promised a pay on condition that we successfully besiege the SAF headquarters. Although the goal was achieved, we still haven’t got paid to date,”

(Source: African Centre for Peace and Justice Studies – [Sudan: The continued use of child soldiers in the armed conflict in South Darfur](#), 18 December 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

ADF explained how children from poor families are targeted by armed groups:

“Unaccompanied children and children from poor families are allegedly targeted by RSF in the outskirts of Khartoum, as well as in Darfur and West Kordofan, for recruitment into combat roles,” Siobhán Mullally, the United Nations

special rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, said in a statement condemning the practice.”

(Source: ADF Magazine – [Witnesses Report Use of Child Soldiers in Sudan’s Conflict](#), 31 October 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Arab News reported that children are being lured into recruitment by offering money and making false promises:

““The root causes of child soldier recruitment in Sudan are multifaceted,” Ahmed Gouja, a journalist from the town of Nyala in Sudan’s war-ravaged Darfur region, told Arab News.

Severe and widespread poverty has driven many children into the arms of the militias.

“Young people, often lacking access to basic necessities like food and a promising future, find themselves drawn to armed groups as a means of survival,” Gouja said. [...]

The Darfur Bar Association is sounding the alarm about increasing child soldier recruitment in the war-ravaged African country. They explained that the RSF lures recruits using a combination of “money” and “false promises.” The paramilitaries have recruited children as young as 14 using these tactics[...].”

(Source: Arab News – [Sudan conflict poses threat of long-term societal harm as recruitment of child soldiers surges](#), 1 September 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Who are the recruiters? Are they state or non-state actors?

In this article dated October 31, 2023, ADF Magazine⁴⁹ reports on the use of child soldiers in Sudan’s conflict:

“In September, the SAF released 30 child soldiers to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The children were among 230 captured during battles with the RSF.

[...] Sudan War Monitor reposted on X, the site formerly known as Twitter, an RSF video showing at least two gun-toting teenagers among a group of fighters mugging for the camera at Idriss Basic School for Girls in Omdurman.”

(Source: ADF Magazine – [Witnesses Report Use of Child Soldiers in Sudan’s Conflict](#), 31 October 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

As reported by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, the UN Special Rapporteur Siobhán Mullally on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, expressed concern about the targeting and recruitment of unaccompanied children by the RSF for combat roles:

“Unaccompanied children and children from poor families are allegedly targeted by RSF in the outskirts of Khartoum, as well as in Darfur and West Kordofan, for recruitment into combat roles,” said Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

(Source: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner – [Sudan: UN expert warns of child recruitment by armed forces](#), 16 October 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the General Assembly Security Council, the non-state actors in Sudan are:

“Parties in the Sudan

Non-State actors

1. Justice and Equality Movementa,f
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahida

⁴⁹ Africa Defense Forum (ADF) magazine is published quarterly by U.S. Africa Command to provide an international forum for African security professionals. ADF magazine spans all 54 countries of the African continent, with feature articles on topical security issues such as counter terrorism strategies, civil-military relations, professionalism, transnational crime, and all other issues affecting peace, stability, and good governance. Bio taken from ADF’s ‘about page’.

3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawia,^f
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction^{a,f}
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction^{a,f}

a Party that recruits and uses children.

f Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

(Source: General Assembly Security Council – [Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General](#), 23 June 2022, pp. 42-45, last accessed 23 May 2024)

To what extent do children associated with armed forces and armed groups have the opportunity to end their activities as a child soldier?

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 stated that:

“Sudan’s legal and constitutional foundation is strong, but of course we will need to work on it and develop new laws, update old laws and upgrade our capacities. For sure Sudan after the war will be different from Sudan before the war.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

The 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons describes Sudan’s efforts and challenges in addressing human trafficking within its borders:

“SUDAN (Tier 2) The Government of Sudan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity, if any; therefore Sudan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions; identifying child trafficking victims among militia members; and providing training on the illegality of recruitment or use of children as soldiers in civilian protection and military forces. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Insecurity hindered Sudan’s ability to accurately report on anti-trafficking efforts for this reporting period. Authorities continued to conflate human trafficking with migrant smuggling, hindering law enforcement efforts. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not disseminate or implement SOPs, developed in partnership with an international organization, for victim identification and referral to care for child trafficking victims. The government has yet to investigate or prosecute any officials for forced recruitment or use of child soldiers.”

(Source: US DOS, Office To Monitor And Combat Trafficking In Persons – [Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023,, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there appropriate assistance, guidance and counselling available for ex-child soldiers, for their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration?

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 stated that:

“The greatest fear I have is the use of children in the armed conflict agenda. Even if the war ended, these children would have been changed/impacted psychologically and profoundly, it will be difficult to reintegrate them back into society and the educational system, the challenges will be bigger. They have witnessed death, and they have become part of the war and the killings. This war wasn’t comprised of killing only, it also came with looting, rape, robberies- all the bad things accompanying this war, I am afraid they were turned into criminals at such a young age.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

In this ‘Reintegration’ brochure published in 2018 by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, included this information:

“What are the key components of effective reintegration?

Psychosocial Support and Mental Health

Former child soldiers experience extreme trauma that can make it difficult to go back to their communities to begin or resume their education. In addition, they are often stigmatized for their former role, which can carry over and affect them in civilian life. As a result, many have a hard time finding their place in society once their ordeal is over. The end of conflict does not necessarily give closure to children for whom experiencing violence has been the norm. Children who have been recruited and used carry the scars of conflict and effective reintegration is vital so that they can live full lives and contribute to a peaceful society.

Educational and vocational opportunities

Children are often released in communities still affected by conflict, and where services were scarce at best before conflict began. War often means that schools are closed, the economy has collapsed and psychosocial expertise is non-existent. Offering former child soldiers a viable alternative to bearing a weapon may be the most important aspect of reintegration. Educational and vocational opportunities may give boys and girls hope that they can once again become integral and valued members of their communities. Equally important is the need to engage with and adequately support and prepare the communities for receiving children separated from armed groups. Beyond the practical challenge of locating the families and communities of the children, successful reintegration must also address the challenge of reconciling children and their communities, especially when children may have committed atrocities.

Gender-sensitive programming

Girls have vulnerabilities unique to their gender and status in society and suffer specific consequences to rape and sexual violence such as pregnancy and pregnancy related complications, stigma and rejection by families and communities. Girls themselves are sometimes reluctant to join reintegration programmes, because they fear the rejection by their families and communities, especially when bringing a child home with them. Their needs, including education and vocational training, must be specially targeted in reintegration programming. UNICEF provides girls held by Boko Haram, like Rukaiya, with social and economic reintegration assistance, including psychosocial support. They also work with families and communities to fight stigma and foster acceptance of children victims of unspeakable violence.”

(Source: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict – [REINTEGRATION of former child soldiers](#), 2018, no page available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are (former) child soldiers prosecuted? If so, are the circumstances, level of development and the age of the child taken into consideration?

The US DOS, in its 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report on Sudan reported that while the Sudanese government has made overall increasing efforts to combat trafficking compared to the previous reporting period, they still have not met the minimum standards in several key areas:

“[...] The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity, if any; therefore Sudan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions; identifying child trafficking victims among militia members; and providing training on the illegality of recruitment or use of children as soldiers in civilian protection and military forces. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Insecurity hindered Sudan’s ability to accurately report on anti-trafficking efforts for this reporting period. Authorities continued to conflate human trafficking with migrant smuggling, hindering law enforcement efforts. [...] The government has yet to investigate or prosecute any officials for forced recruitment or use of child soldiers.”

(Source: US DOS, Office To Monitor And Combat Trafficking In Persons – [Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 15 June 2023,, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.4. FGM/C

8.4.1. Legislation and policy

Is national legislation and policy in place prohibiting the use of FGM?

28 Too Many in their 2018, ‘Sudan: The Law and FGM’ report, stated that:

“National

Under the 2020 amendment to the Criminal Act (1991), anyone found guilty of committing the crime of FGM shall be punished with three years’ imprisonment and a fine or closing of the premises where the FGM took place. The fine is not prescribed by law and is to be determined by judicial discretion. The Criminal Act (1991) sets out the following penalties for causing ‘wounds’ or ‘hurt’:

- Section 139 – anyone causing ‘intentional wounds’ to another person is subject to punishment of up to five years’ imprisonment, or a fine, or both;
- Section 140 – anyone causing ‘semi-intentional wounds’ to another person is subject to punishment of up to three years’ imprisonment, or a fine, or both; and
- Section 142 – anyone causing ‘hurt’ to another person is subject to punishment of up to six months’ imprisonment, or a fine, or both.

State

- South Kordofan – The Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2008) includes a range of penalties from three years’ imprisonment and compensation payable to the victim, up to ten years’ imprisonment and compensation payable to the victim’s family in the case of the victim’s death.
- Gadarif – The Child Law 2009 stipulates a maximum of 6 months’ imprisonment or a fine of not less than 100 SDG (approximately US\$0.23) 16, or both, but without prejudice to any civil compensation that may be available. It also stipulates that the court concerned may give part of the fine to the victim.
- South Darfur – The Child Act 2013 does not include a provision for penalties.
- Red Sea – The Child Act 2011 does not include a provision for penalties.

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Sudan: The Law and FGM](#), July 2018, updated in March 2022, pg. 5, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Does the state take measures to prevent FGM? Are other organisations (such as NGOs) involved in combatting FGM?

Equality Now explains the challenges facing activists and civil society organisations to oppose FGM amongst the current conflict:

“The usual activities undertaken by activists and civil society organizations – such as advocacy campaigns, community outreach programs, and legal reforms – may be hampered by the chaotic and unpredictable nature of conflict environments, making it challenging to mobilize support and raise awareness about the harms of FGM. [...]

Women’s rights groups in Khartoum and other towns have established Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) and other community-driven mutual aid efforts that could be used to mainstream FGM-related interventions as they respond to emerging humanitarian needs. Additionally, efforts to integrate FGM prevention and response into broader humanitarian assistance programs are essential in reaching displaced populations with life-saving interventions and support.

Engaging communities, religious leaders, and key stakeholders in the ‘new social structures’ shaped by conflict and displacement can foster much-needed dialogue, dispel myths, and promote alternative rites of passage that celebrate womanhood without resorting to harmful practices.”

(Source: Equality Now – [Female Genital Mutilation Continues Amid Sudan’s Conflict And Forced Displacement](#), 26 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In their comprehensive report, ‘Sudan: The Law and FGM,’ updated in March 2022, 28 Too Many delves into the legal landscape surrounding female genital mutilation/cutting in Sudan since its initial publication in July 2018:

“Relevant Government Authorities and Strategies

Various government departments and professional bodies are responsible for implementing the national campaign to end FGM in Sudan, including the Ministries of Welfare and Social Services, Health, Guidance and Endowment and the Medical Council.

The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) is the government authority that coordinates work in collaboration with the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (UNJP), which has been working in Sudan since 2008. The NCCW has established a roadmap for training community leaders and health providers on law enforcement. This roadmap will be aligned with national strategies such as the National Health Sector Strategy, the National Girls Education Sector Strategy, the National Social Protection Strategy and the Gender-Based Violence Strategy. Furthermore, a Memorandum of Understanding will be established with the media for the purpose of running a communications campaign on the law against FGM.¹⁸ It is not yet clear when that Memorandum will be established. The National Strategy to Combat Female Genital Mutilation 2008–2018 was launched as a partnership between government and civil-society organisations to address the religious, health, social and cultural aspects of FGM.¹⁹ At state level there are also local government departments, councils and steering committees for anti-FGM advocacy.

A national communications campaign was launched in 2008 focused around the idea of the uncut woman or Saleema (the Arabic word for ‘whole, undamaged, unharmed, and complete’). This positioned FGM within the broader frameworks of child protection and gender equality.²⁰ UNICEF continues to implement the Saleema social norms marketing campaign to promote long-term abandonment of FGM. This included the development of promotional products, radio programmes, billboards and a campaign song, and the engagement of local singers, comedians, artists and religious scholars as Saleema ‘ambassadors’.²¹ A study completed in 2019 demonstrated that the Saleema initiative is effective in reducing social norms that sustain FGM.²²

Government departments have partnered with the UNJP and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to develop advocacy campaigns with religious leaders and the media, implement reproductive-health services and midwife training, provide information and counselling to parents of new-born girls and incorporate awareness education into the school curriculum. An online dialogue platform to address FGM has also been developed and a comprehensive mapping exercise of the communities practising FGM has been undertaken.²³ Moreover, in November 2020, police forces nationwide were instructed to enforce the criminalisation of FGM. At a seminar on the incrimination of FGM organised by the National Council for Child Care, Police Chief Lt Gen Ezzeldin El Sheikh stated that the police will pay special attention to the practice of FGM. The police chief proposed addressing various communities in their local languages ‘until they reach the stage of conviction’ and emphasised the role of religious leaders and institutions in the enforcement of the new laws.²⁴

¹⁸ Michela Lugiai, Yasir Shalabi, Vincenzo Racialbutto, Damiano Pizzol and Lee Smith (2021) ‘Female Genital Mutilation in Sudan: is a new era starting?’, *Sexuality & Culture*, 25, pp.1,540–1,545. Available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12119-021-09823-y>.

¹⁹ United Nations (2009) General Assembly Report A/HRC/10/NGO/77, 26 February. Available at https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1073132/1227_1244999980_sudan.pdf.

²⁰ The Girl Generation (undated) ‘In Sudan, FGM crosses religious and ethnic lines. It is practiced by both Muslims and Christians’, Sudan. Available at <https://www.thegirlgeneration.org/regions/sudan>.

²¹ UNICEF (2020) A Decade of Action to Achieve Gender Equality: The UNICEF Approach to the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/documents/decade-action-achieve-genderequality-unicef-approach-elimination-female-genital>.

²² W. Douglas Evans, Cody Donahue, Jeremy Snider, Nafisa Bedri, Tibyaan A. Elhussein and Samira Ahmed Elamin (2019) ‘The Saleema initiative in Sudan to abandon female genital mutilation: Outcomes and dose response effects’, *PLOS One*, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0213380>.

²³ UNFPA-UNICEF (2017) 2016 Annual Report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change, p.66. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNFPA_UNICEF_FGM_16_Report_web.pdf.

²⁴ Dabanga (2020) Sudan police to enforce criminalisation of ‘pharaonic circumcision’, 24 November. Available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-police-to-enforce-criminalisation-of-pharaoniccircumcision>.

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Sudan: The Law and FGM](#), July 2018, updated in March 2022, pp. 6-7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are persons involved in the practice of FGM legally prosecuted?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 commented that:

“[...] FGM is being criminalized, for example, in South Kordofan, but it’s not criminalised in other areas. [...] For example, Khartoum, they are not prohibiting the FGM. But in South Kordofan, they are doing it by-law.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

In this 2020 article, Al Jazeera reports on a significant legislative change in Sudan, where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been criminalised:

“Sudan has criminalised female genital mutilation (FGM), making it punishable by three years in jail, a move campaigners have said will usher in a “new era” for girls’ rights in the country.

Almost nine out of 10 women and girls in Sudan have undergone FGM, according to United Nations data. The procedure usually involves the partial or total removal of the female genitalia and can cause a host of health problems.

Sudan’s transitional government approved an amendment to its criminal legislation last week, stating that anyone who performs FGM either inside a medical establishment or elsewhere faces three years’ imprisonment and a fine. Women’s rights groups said the punishment would help to end FGM, but warned it would be difficult to change minds in communities that view the traditional practice as necessary to marry their daughters.

“FGM prevalence in Sudan is one of the highest globally. It is now time to use punitive measures to ensure girls are protected from this torturous practice,” Faiza Mohamed, Africa regional director for Equality Now, was quoted as saying by Thomson Reuters Foundation.”

(Source: Al Jazeera – [Sudan criminalises FGM, makes it punishable by 3 years in prison](#), 30 April 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The FGM/C Research Initiative, 28 Too Many reported that:

“It has not been possible to establish whether any prosecutions have taken place in Sudan since the national legislation prohibiting FGM was passed. There is also no evidence of the other articles of the Criminal Act (1991) being used to prosecute perpetrators of FGM.

It has not been possible to establish if any prosecutions have taken place within the four states that have attempted to criminalise FGM. In 2009, local media reported that a 40-day-old girl died after being cut in the Red Sea state. Although the case was reported to the police, the family refused to give the name of the midwife responsible for the act.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Liv Tønnessen, Samia El-Nagar and Sharifa Bamkar, op. cit

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Sudan: The Law and FGM](#), July 2018, updated in March 2022, pg.6, last accessed 24 May 2024)

8.4.2. Situation

Is FGM a (widespread) phenomenon in Sudan?

The UK government confirmed the high prevalence of FGM rates in Sudan:

“Sudan has one of the highest rates of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the world and is one of the few countries where child marriage remains legal. Nearly 9 in 10 women and girls aged 15 to 49 have undergone some form of FGM. 60% of girls are married before they turn 18.”

(Source: UK Government – [UK to nearly double aid for Sudan as humanitarian crisis deepens](#), 28 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF released a report on 7 March 2024 highlighting new data on global rates of FGM which has risen by 15%:

“Over 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), according to a newly released UNICEF report. The updated global estimates show a 15 per cent increase in the total number of survivors – or 30 million more girls and women – compared to data released eight years ago.

Released on International Women’s Day, the data shows that the pace of progress to end FGM remains slow, lagging behind population growth, especially in places where FGM is most common, and far off-pace to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal to eliminate the practice. The global pace of decline would need to be 27 times faster to end the practice by 2030. [...]

Places like Somalia and Sudan face the challenge of addressing widespread FGM, among other urgent issues, and amid conflict and population growth.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Over 230 million girls and women alive today have been subject to female genital mutilation](#), 8 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Guardian also reported on the UNICEF report, noting that:

“The number of girls and women who have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) has increased by 15% in the past eight years, according to new data.[...]

About 60% of FGM cases – 144m – happen in Africa, with Somalia, Guinea, Djibouti, Egypt, Sudan and Mali have the highest prevalence rates.”

(Source: The Guardian – [Dramatic rise in women and girls being cut, new FGM data reveals](#), 8 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Equality Now have emphasised the ongoing practice of FGM despite its ban in 2020:

“Although Sudan legally banned the practice of FGM in 2020, women and girls continue to face heightened risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse, including FGM. Ongoing conflict has led to the breakdown of the rule of law and governance structures in Khartoum and a few other states.”

(Source: Equality Now – [Female Genital Mutilation Continues Amid Sudan’s Conflict And Forced Displacement](#), 26 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“Female genital mutilation is an issue that is taken very seriously, especially in the marginalised areas. It is not so much a problem in Khartoum, although it occurs frequently there as well. But it’s a very serious problem in Darfur and other peripheral regions. But it’s an extremely private matter. It is supported by a very long tradition of the practice, which is only gradually fading away. I think one of the benefits of people being in IDP camps is that they see that while all the girls in the village may have endured FGM – their personal village may have been cut, they

encounter many women who've not, girls [who have not been cut]. So I think there's a growing consensus in Sudan that this is a harmful practice, that it is highly discriminatory, painful, and unnecessary for women. [...]

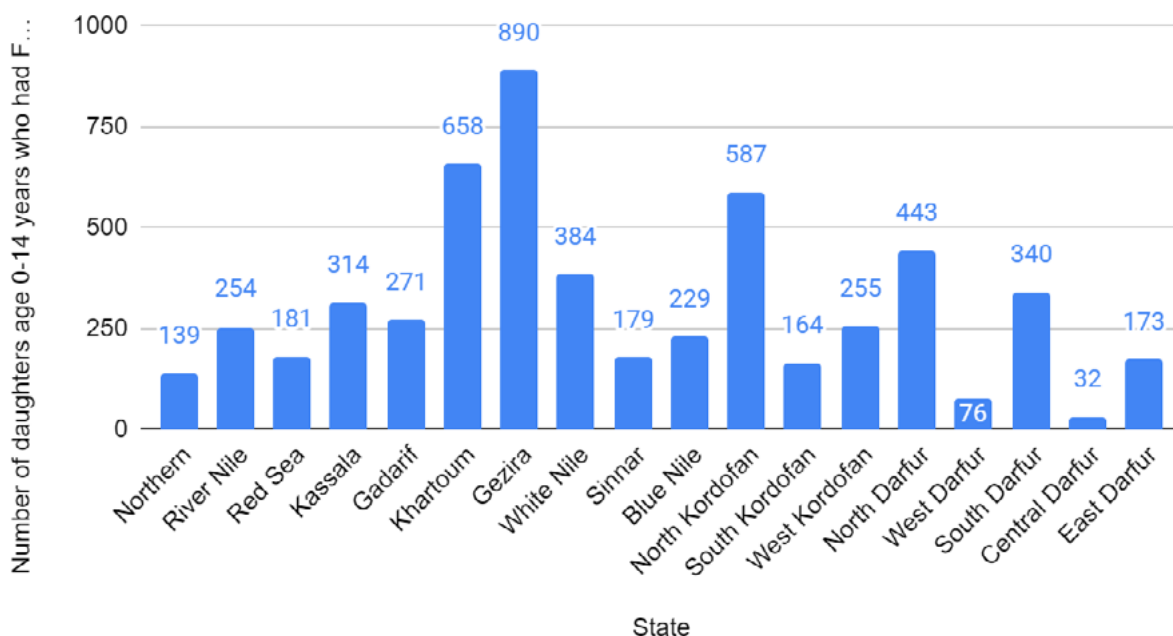
For example, in Darfur, it would often be not the mother but the aunt who would take an adolescent girl through the process of general mutilation.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Is data available on the number of girls who have been subjected to FGM? If possible, disaggregated by age and region?

According to a survey carried out in 2014 by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), In Sudan, the prevalence of FGM in women aged 0-14 is 5,570:⁵⁰

Number of daughters age 0-14 years who had FGM/C vs. State



(Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan – [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan](#), February 2016, pg. 216, last accessed 24 May 2024)

In what regions is FGM practiced and in which cultural/ethnic/religious groups is it reported to have occurred?

The ‘Country Profile: FGM in Sudan’ by 28 Too Many, published in November 2019, offers an analysis of the prevalence and cultural context of female genital mutilation in Sudan:

“The prevalence of FGM among women living in urban areas appears to be very similar to that among women living in rural areas. In general, states in the centre and north-west have the highest prevalence.¹⁵

The relationship between a woman’s level of wealth and whether or not she has had FGM is quite complex; however, the practice is most prevalent among women in the richest wealth quintile (91.6%).¹⁶

Most ethnic groups practise FGM, except for the Fur, Hawsa and Umbarraro.¹⁷

⁵⁰ For readability, Asylos has sourced this data from the [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan](#) and presented it in this chart.

The UNFPA has concluded that ‘ethnicity is the most significant factor in FGM prevalence, cutting across socioeconomic class and level of education.’¹⁸

Recent reports have noted that women from non-practising communities in Sudan who have migrated to practising communities have felt pressured to be cut as they feel ‘unclean’.¹⁹

[...]The most common reasons given for the practice of FGM in Sudan are ‘purification, cleanliness and hygiene, acceptability within the group and reducing sexual desire’.²⁸

A study of Nyala University students found that male students felt that religion was the most important reason for FGM, whereas female students felt that it was the least important (and that ‘traditional beliefs’ was the most important).²⁹

While 73% of male students would prefer to marry women who had not been cut, 64.5% would still have their daughters undergo FGM.³⁰

¹⁵ MICS 2014, p.214.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Secondary Analysis, p.11.

¹⁸ The UNFPA as cited in the Secondary Analysis, p.15.

²⁸ SHHS 2010, p.198.

²⁹ Murat Akbas, Ozer Birge, Deniz Arslan and Ozbey Ertugrul Gazi (2019) ‘Opinions of Ny

³⁰ Ibid.

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, pp. 12-13, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Which type of FGM is applied? At what age does FGM take place?

“• Type III (‘sewn closed’) is the most common type of FGM practised.”

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Sudan: The Law and FGM](#), July 2018, updated in March 2022, pg. 1, last accessed 23 May 2024)

28 Too Many documented in two separate reports that:

“• Most women have been cut between the ages of five and nine.”

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Sudan: The Law and FGM](#), July 2018, updated in March 2022, pg. 1, last accessed 23 May 2024)

[...] One study has found that, in Khartoum State, the age of cutting also varies between different ethnic groups. For example, girls from the Gamoeia ethnic group are cut between the ages of six and nine, usually during the school holidays, whereas girls from the Melaoha ethnic group (who are Sudanese Arabs) are cut in the week following their birth, so that the same midwife who attended the birth can perform FGM.”

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, pg. 38, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Does FGM re-occur after women have given birth or for other reasons?

According to 28 Too Many:

“Midwives in Sudan also perform reinfibulation (adal) a procedure to re-sew the genitals following childbirth. This affects a significant proportion of Sudanese women (23.9% of ever-married women aged 15–49 who have ever given birth). However, in Kassala state, for example, this figure almost trebles to 62.5%.²⁶

[...] Reinfibulation is not technically against the law in Sudan, but medical doctors and gynaecologists are not supposed to carry out the procedure and should only conduct repairs that are required after childbirth, such as stitching to stem bleeding (for example, to close an episiotomy). 28 Too Many understands that it is usually the

midwives who carry out reinfibulation – doctors may attend births due to complications, but will leave the midwives to complete any medical procedures that follow. Once the doctors leave the room, it is reported that midwives might perform reinfibulation either with or without the woman’s consent. Many young women do not understand the implications and are convinced by the midwife that reinfibulation will make them look ‘neat and beautiful’ again for their husbands. Some women also request the procedure because it is thought to be ‘fashionable’ – they believe ‘this is my body; I do it for my relationship with my husband’ – and they expect their husbands to pay midwives well for their services and to buy their wives gifts for making themselves ‘tight like virgins’ again. Hence, it has been observed that reinfibulation is more common among women from wealthier families, although there is no data to quantify this. [...]”

26 Secondary Analysis, p.26.

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, pg. 54, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can girls refuse FGM?

This report from 28 Too Many titled ‘Country Profile: FGM in Sudan’, published in November 2019, highlights the prevalent use of traditional cutters for performing female genital mutilation on very young girls, particularly in rural areas of Khartoum, to ensure conformity to community traditions and prepare them for early marriage:

“Among daughters aged 0–14, traditional cutters are more commonly used when a girl is cut before the age of five.

26 In some states, for instance, FGM is performed at a very young age (as early as the first week after birth); hence, a family will use the services of a traditional birth attendant (TBA) who lives and works in their community and likely attended the baby girl’s delivery. Evidence from rural Khartoum, where some communities continue to strongly support Type III/infibulation, shows that TBAs commonly perform FGM on girls at a preschool age. This is done in the belief that, if they cut early, girls will conform to the traditions of the community (and be available for early marriage), but if they go to school uncut, they will be ‘influenced’ by others’ views and practices.”

26 Secondary Analysis, p.26.

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, pg. 51, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can parents refuse FGM for their daughters? If so, are there any possible consequences for the daughters and parents?

Referring to a 2018 Population Council and a 2019 study of Nyala University students⁵¹, 28 Too Many documented that:

“A 2018 Population Council study looked at the pace of change in Sudan.⁷ The study investigated how different families perceive FGM and their decision-making surrounding it. The investigation was carried out in urban and rural areas of Khartoum and Gadarif states. It found that:

- decision-making about FGM is a lengthy and complex process and involves many people within the nuclear and extended families, as well as other influencers;
- mothers are key decision-makers, but do not make decisions alone, and they may fear sanctions for disagreeing with other decision-makers;
- a mother is more likely to subject her daughter(s) to FGM if she herself has been cut; and
- men are often involved and influential in the process, although the views of older and younger men are often contradictory. Men tend to be particularly influential when they oppose FGM.

⁵¹ Murat Akbas, Ozer Birge, Deniz Arslan and Ozbey Ertugrul Gazi (2019) ‘Opinions of Nyala University students about female genital mutilation’, Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, June 2019.

Some younger men who were part of the study expressed a willingness to marry women who have not undergone FGM, but they were also concerned about excessive sexual desire in women who have not been cut.

The study concluded that, when parents make the final decision regarding FGM for their daughter, they are influenced by dominant social norms and by other family members who are also influenced by other people and factors and norms. In general, the widespread support and practice of FGM/C in the research area is perpetuated and sustained by deeply rooted social norms and gender power structures that centre on the need to reduce women's sexual desire in order to protect them.⁸

The authors further concluded that the widespread support and practise of FGM/C in the research areas is perpetuated and sustained by deeply rooted social norms associated with gender power relations that control women as subordinate and undermine their rights. The norms are justified by the supposed need to 'protect' women and girls from their perceived excessive and dangerous 'sexual desire'. Such gender views are often projected as social norms and cultural values or religious beliefs."¹⁰

⁷ A. Gamal Eldin, S. Babiker, M. Sabahelzain and M. Eltayeb (2018) 'FGM/C Decision-Making Process and the Role of Gender Power Relations in Sudan', Evidence to End FGM/C: Research to Help Girls and Women Thrive. New York, NY: Population Council.

⁸ Ibid., p.v

¹⁰ Ibid., p.34 (emphasis 28 Too Many's).

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, pg. 62, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports of girls/women who face discrimination and loss of social status because they have not been subjected to FGM? If so, how does this manifest in their daily life?

In a country report profiling published in 2019 on Sudan, 28 Too Many noted that explained that:

"The Saleema Initiative is, however, considered by the anti-FGM network in Sudan to be effective in changing attitudes. As a unique grassroots initiative and Sudanese campaign (rather than one imposed by Western campaigners), activists and communities are proud of it and recognise the empowerment and confidence it is encouraging in youth, particularly girls, as positive messaging is increasingly used to tackle FGM. The African Union has recently also adopted the campaign, with the intention of rolling it out across practising countries in Africa. There has also been identified an urgent need to better understand the impact of Saleema on future attitudes towards those women and girls who have already had FGM (in terms of how they will be viewed and treated by society if they do not 'fit the popular image' of Saleema)."

(Source: 28 Too Many – [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this story "*Soumayya's story: A bold fight against female genital mutilation*", published by OHCHR in December 2017, a young girl named Soumayya shares her escape journey:

"“Because I was not circumcised, I was insulted throughout my childhood,” said Soumayya. “People would point at me, saying ‘She’s not circumcised, she’s not a good girl’.”

When she was in her 20s, after her father died, she was told that she must get circumcised in order to be married.

“Well, I said, no way. I refused to be circumcised. And so I didn’t marry.”

Instead, Soumayya started a women's organization, Selima, which advocated an end to this practice. The group ran community education campaigns to inform parents and families of young girls about the damaging health consequences of FGM, organizing protests against the practice, at times keeping 6-year-old girls from their families when the time came for their circumcision.

In 2012, as a result of these activities, Soumayya was arrested and sent to jail. During the months she was in prison, Soumayya was physically abused by prison guards, raped multiple times and became pregnant. During the pregnancy, she was accused of prostitution and sentenced to a beating of 100 strikes by stick, which was carried out in a public square, resulting in the death of the foetus. She was brought to a clinic for treatment, and it was during

her stay at the clinic that she managed to escape. She crossed the border into Libya, and from there joined other migrants on a crowded boat heading for Italy, where with the help of smugglers she managed to reach Belgium in 2013.”

(Source: OHCHR – [Soumayya’s story: A bold fight against female genital mutilation](#), 1 December 2017, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Can parents who oppose FGM effectively protect their daughters upon return?

In this story, published in December 2022 by UNICEF “Protecting Fatima from female genital mutilation”, the story of nine-year old Fatima is documented:

“Although legislation in Sudan criminalizes female genital mutilation, the harmful practice remains common and primarily done secretly.

Determined and committed to protect Fatima

To protect Fatima, her family has relocated to Hai-Alnazir, where they live among the Hausa tribe. The Hausa, who originated in Nigeria, do not practice female circumcision. More than ever, Fatima’s parents are determined to protect their daughters from female genital mutilation, regardless of the pressure from other family members, friends, and communities.

Fatima’s father, Meraiseel, who witnessed the tragic death of his cousin following complications from FGM confirms that circumcision of their daughters will not happen under their watch. “My wife and I will do everything in our power to keep our daughters safe from getting circumcised,” he said, as his wife nodded in agreement. “We have witnessed and felt the negative consequences of FGM in our communities, and it is our responsibility as parents and citizens to educate our people about this harmful practice,” he continued.

Fatima’s mother, Hanadi, is well respected in her community and a member of the Al Sunut Child Protection Network. She has benefitted from several UNICEF-supported child protection trainings including those on FGM through the ‘Saleema’ initiative thanks to funding from the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Canadian Government. The knowledge and information acquired have greatly changed her perception on female circumcision and today, she is determined to protect not only her daughters but all girls in her community against traditional harmful practices.

However, as a member of the Child Protection Network, it will take more than her efforts to bring about the desired change in her community—the abandonment of female genital mutilation. “I understand and feel Fatima’s difficulties with her peers and the community because she is not circumcised. But, as parents, we are only doing what is right and in her best interest,” she said.

Hanadi also participates in focus group discussions with local authorities, religious leaders, women, and men educating them on the benefits of abandoning the practice, the negative effects and addressing misconceptions. She will leave no stone unturned.

The efforts of the CP committee are backed up by locality leadership. The Deputy Executive Director of the Al Sunut locality, Mr. Abu Bakr Alsiddig noted - “As a government and community, we cannot do it alone. We need our partners to support us with programmes that enhance the knowledge of our communities on these harmful traditional practices,” before calling for increased partnerships in the fight against FGM. “We also need to engage more with our girls, youth, women, and men to raise awareness about the dangers of the practice and the call for total abandonment,” he added.

The request from leaders and communities, including Fatima and her family, fits into the ‘Saleema Initiative’ that UNICEF and its partners support and implement in Sudan. With increased community demand to implement the

‘Saleema Initiative’ including related bylaws and legislations to end female genital mutilation in Sudan, children like Fatima will be able to enjoy their basic human rights no matter where they live.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Protecting Fatima from female genital mutilation](#), 13 December 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.5. Forced and underage/child marriage

8.5.1. Legislation and policy

Is there legislation and policy protecting children from forced and underage/child marriage? What is the legal age of marriage and is this standard adhered to in practice? Is it different for girls and boys?

UNICEF country profile data shows that there is no minimum age of marriage in Sudan:

“[...] Marriage registration

Legal framework for marriage registration: Muslim Personal Law Act (1991)

[...]

Legal age for marriage: There is no minimum age of marriage in Sudan

[...] Data sources: Information on civil registration systems was compiled over a period from December 2016 to November 2017 using the existing relevant legal frameworks and in consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices.”

(Source: UNICEF Data – [Civil registration system Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF in its 2021 Annual report:

“GENDER

[...]Data on child marriage shows an increasing trend of children marrying before their fifteenth birthday, with the highest prevalence in South Darfur state. The increase might be due to factors such as rising poverty, and family honour. Nationally, around 38 per cent of girls marries before their eighteenth birthday, however recent numbers from the Simple Spatial Survey Method (S3M, 2018), show that 64.6 per cent of women with children younger than five years were married when still a child. Further, one fifth of women, aged 20-24, in Sudan had her first child before she reached eighteen years.”

(Source: UNICEF – [SUDAN: Gender 2021 Annual Report](#), 2022, pg. 5-6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF country profile data shows that there is no minimum age of marriage in Sudan:

“[...] Marriage registration

Legal framework for marriage registration: Muslim Personal Law Act (1991)

[...]

Legal age for marriage: There is no minimum age of marriage in Sudan

[...] Data sources: Information on civil registration systems was compiled over a period from December 2016 to November 2017 using the existing relevant legal frameworks and in consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices.”

(Source: UNICEF Data – [Civil registration system Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

OECD database indicates that in Sudan child marriage is legal for both women and men, or there is no legal age of marriage specified:

Variable	Value	Information and clarification of variable ⁵²
Law	75	“Information: ..DF_CM_LAW [...] (Source: SIGI 2023 Legal Survey, Date last input received: 2023, (Source Periodicity: Every four years, Data (Source(s) used: SIGI 2023 Legal Survey [...] Reference period: 2022, Unit of measure used : Score (0-100), [...] Scores range from 0 (no discrimination) to 100 (absolute discrimination): [...] 75: Child marriage is legal for both women and men, or there is no legal age of marriage specified.”

(Source: OECD Development Centre – [Gender, Institutions and Development Database \(GID-DB\) 2023](#), last updated March 2023, last accessed 24 May 2024)

What is the age of sexual consent?

AgeOfConsent.net, a website that provides information about the age of consent around the world, indicates that there is no age specified by the law of sexual consent in Sudan, but marriage is required (note that there are no details of the provider of the website or when it was updated):

“Sudan has no legal age of consent, because marriage is legally required before sexual intercourse is allowed. If there is no age limit to marriage, there is effectively no age of consent between married individuals. Sexual activity outside of marriage is illegal in Sudan, and there is no defined age of consent.”

(Source: Age of Consent – [Age of Consent in Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Reuters noted that marital rape is not considered crime:

“[...] Sudanese women face a barrage of threats, from child marriage to domestic violence and rape. One in three women are married before 18, while nine out of 10 have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), the United Nations (U.N.) says.

Yet there are few policies in place to protect women and girls. Marital rape and child marriage, for example, are not considered crimes in the predominately Muslim African nation.”

(Source: Reuters – [It’s about freedom’: Women on the frontline of Sudan’s uprising](#), 6 February 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Does the state take preventive measures against forced and underage/child marriage? What kind?

UNICEF country profile data shows that there is no minimum age of marriage in Sudan:

“[...] Marriage registration
 Legal framework for marriage registration: Muslim Personal Law Act (1991)
 [...]
 Legal age for marriage: There is no minimum age of marriage in Sudan
 [...] Data sources: Information on civil registration systems was compiled over a period from December 2016 to November 2017 using the existing relevant legal frameworks and in consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices.”

(Source: UNICEF Data – [Civil registration system Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

⁵² For usability, Asylos has sourced this data from the OECD Development Centre website and presented it in this chart.

UNICEF research report outlined the progress/efforts to establish national measures against underage/child marriage (note that as of November 2023 I was not able to find that the minimum age for marriage has been changed):

“[...] In 2012, UNICEF and the National Council of Childhood Welfare (NCCW) conducted a Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey in six states with the highest prevalence of child marriage. These survey results found that 54 per cent of the girls in these six states were married before age 18, whilst the 2010 MICS found a 37.8 per cent rate of marriage before age 18 nationally, galvanizing civil society and government leaders and leading to the drafting of the first National Strategy in 2014. In 2015, the first lady of Sudan officially sponsored the National Strategy and launched the First Lady Campaign to End Child Marriage in Sudan. As of November 2016, key informants at the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan said that the National Strategy was still awaiting endorsement from the government, and was being reviewed by the Islamic Religious Council. Then it is expected to be endorsed by the Minister of Social Welfare and the NCCW. Additionally, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is working on revising the 1991 Personal Status Law. A key informant at the MoJ reported that the review has been a collaborative process with other government entities and civil society organizations. They expect to make several important changes, including: setting the minimum age of marriage for girls to 16 or 18 years of age, revising the definition of marriage, changing the age of child custody for mothers, and modifying the procedures needed in case of divorce.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Sudan Country Brief](#), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2017, pg. 11 last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.5.2. Statistics

Are there reports of children (girls, boys) being forced to marry? Is this a regional (which regions, or among which ethnic or religious groups) or a national phenomenon? Is data available on the number of children (girls and boys) being forced to marry or being married before the age of 18?

Women for Women International explained how food scarcity in the region has increased the risk of gender-based violence, including child and forced marriage:

“While men are left behind to fight, women and girls are forced to flee for safety reasons. While on the move, women struggle to access food for themselves and their children. Unfortunately, the food available is usually limited and less nutritious, which forces women and girls to eat last and consume less. Food scarcity has increased the risk of Gender-Based violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse, and drives harmful coping strategies, including child, early, and forced marriage.

For instance, there are reports of widespread rape and militia marrying young girls by force and turning them into slaves.”

(Source: Women for Women International – [One Year Into the Conflict, Do Not Forget the Women of Sudan](#), 25 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UN Human Rights Council echoed concerns of the rise of trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children in Sudan:

“UN experts today expressed alarm about increasing reports of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, for purposes of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery, child and forced marriage,[...].

[...]Young women and girls, including internally displaced persons are reportedly being trafficked for sexual slavery and other forms of sexual exploitation.[...]The experts also expressed concern about the increase in child, early and forced marriage, reportedly a result of family separation, and gender-based violence, including rape and unwanted pregnancies.”

(Source: UN Human Rights Council – [Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts](#), 22 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The United Nations further expressed concern on sex trafficking and child recruitment in Sudan:

“[...]“We are appalled by reports of women and girls being sold at slave markets in areas controlled by RSF forces and other armed groups, including in North Darfur,” the experts said.
Some of the cases of child and forced marriage are occurring due to family separation and gender-based violence, including rape and unwanted pregnancies.”

(Source: United Nations – [World News in Brief: Sex trafficking and child recruitment in Sudan, new mass grave in Libya, children at risk in DR Congo](#), 22 March 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The OECD statistical database shows the prevalence of boy and girl child marriage and a score of legal protection in Sudan (note that statistics of girl child marriage are based on Unicef Child Marriage data (2022), which includes data from [SUDAN Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 Final Report](#) also quoted later on in more detail).

Variables	Value	Information and clarification of each variable
Prevalence of boy child marriage (15-19 years old)	1.8	“[...] Information: [...] Name of collection/source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019), World Marriage Data (2019), Unicef Child Marriage data (2022). [...] Reference period: Various years depending on the underlying source. Units of measure used: Percentage (%). [...] Key statistical concept: Percentage of boys aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union.
Prevalence of girl child marriage (15-19 years old)	21.2	“[...] Information: [...] Name of collection/source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019), World Marriage Data (2019), Unicef Child Marriage data (2022). [...] Reference period: Various years depending on the underlying source. Units of measure used: Percentage (%). [...] Key statistical concept: Prevalence of girl child marriage: Percentage of girls aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union. Variable used to compute the SIGI 2023.”
Prevalence of girl child marriage (20-24 years old)	34.2	“[...] Information: [...] Name of collection/source: Unicef Child Marriage data (2022). [...] Reference period: Various years depending on the underlying source. Unit of measure used: Percentage (%), [...]. Key statistical concept: Prevalence of girl child marriage (SDG Indicator 5.3.1): Percentage of women aged 20-24 years married or in union before age 18.”

(Source: OECD Development Centre – [Gender, Institutions and Development Database \(GID-DB\) 2023](#), last updated March 2023, last accessed 24 May 2024)

UNICEF, World Health Organization, European Union, World Food Programme, African Development Bank snapshot shows the prevalence and distribution of child marriage in Sudan:

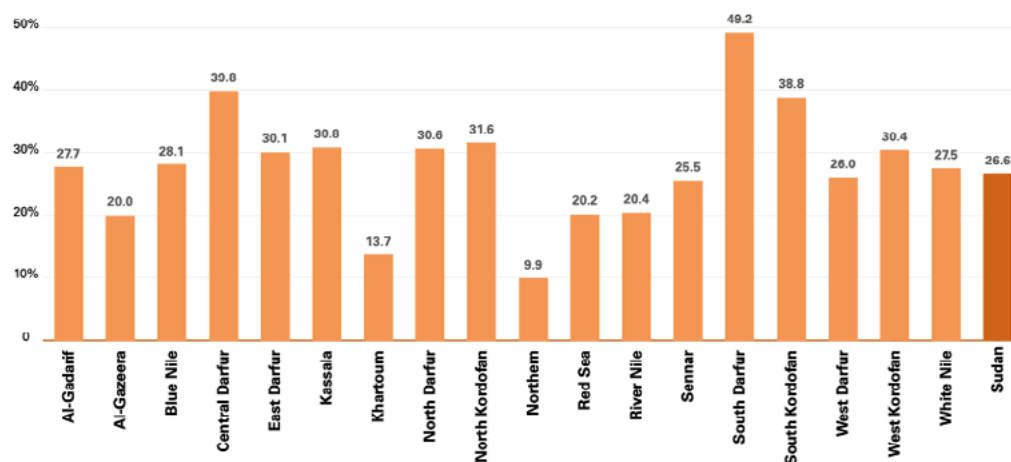
“KEY MESSAGES
Child marriage is defined as the marriage of a girl or a boy before 18 years of age. The institution of child marriage affects girls disproportionately, as it compromises their development, often results in early pregnancy and social isolation, and impairs their ability to pursue educational and vocational training opportunities. These consequences combine to reinforce the gendered nature of poverty.

- 26.6 per cent of girls aged 20-24 years were first married or in union before 15 years of age.
- 60.2 per cent of girls aged 20-24 years were first married or in union before 18 years of age.

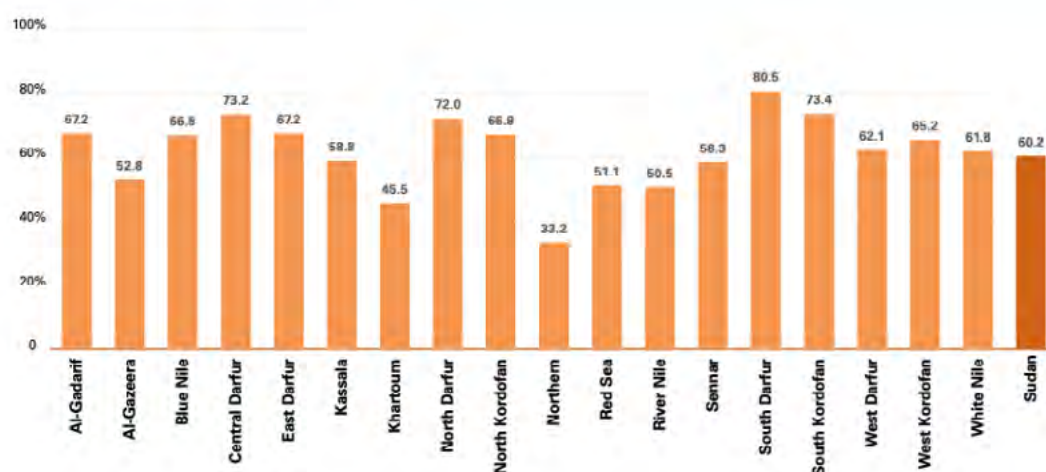
53 For usability, Asylos has sourced this data from the OECD Development Centre website and presented it in this chart.

- Child marriage has severe ramifications for child and maternal health, well-being and education and is strongly linked to child abuse and the perpetuation of the poverty cycle.
- Child marriage is a violation of fundamental human rights, particularly the right to the free and full consent to a marriage, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Ending early marriage will require political commitment, resilient and visionary leadership, and technical support to civil society organizations and groups working to address cultural and behavioural change. It also will require collaborative efforts to provide quality education and vocational training to girls.”

MARRIED AT OR BEFORE 15 YEARS OF AGE



MARRIED AT OR BEFORE 18 YEARS OF AGE



(Source: UNICEF, World Health Organisation, European Union, World Food Programme, African Development Bank – [Child marriage in Sudan A snapshot from the Simple Spatial Survey Method \(S3M II\)](#), February 2021, pp. 1-2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.6. Domestic violence

8.6.1. Legislation

Is there legislation and policy protecting children from child abuse? Are there national provisions referring to domestic violence? Are they enforced?

End Corporal Punishment country profile for Sudan outlines the laws of corporal punishment for children in Sudan:

“Current legality of corporal punishment

Home

Corporal punishment is lawful in the home. Sudan did not declare independence from the UK until 1956, so the English common law defence of “reasonable chastisement” is applicable. Provisions against violence, inhuman and degrading treatment and abuse in the Child Act 2010, the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan 2005 and other laws are not interpreted as prohibiting all corporal punishment in childrearing. In 2012, Rules under the Child Act were being drafted: we have no further information. We have yet to see the full text in English of the Disability Act 2009 and of the 2017 Persons with Disabilities Act but there are no indications that they prohibit corporal punishment. The Government has reported that a National Policy to Combat Violence Against Women and Children 2016-2031 and a National Plan to Combat Violence Against Women 2017-2022 had been drafted, but we have been unable to study the texts.¹

At state level, all states have adopted constitutions which provide for child protection. Specific child legislation has been adopted in the states of the Red Sea, Kassala, South Kordufan, West Darfur and South Darfur; in 2010 child bills were under discussion in the states of Blue Nile, North Darfur and Gezira.

Alternative care settings

There is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment: it is lawful as for parents (see under “Home”).

Day care

Corporal punishment is unlawful in day care. Pursuant to article 29(2) of the Child Act 2010, the Regulation on behaviour control in educational institutions 2020 prohibits corporal punishment in all preschool institutions as well as “interim” institutions. (see under “Schools”).

Schools

Corporal punishment is unlawful in schools. At federal level, the Child Act prohibits “cruel penalties” in school (art. 29(1)). Article 29(2) of the Child Act calls for the Ministry of Instruction and General Education to specify the sanctions for contravening article 29(1). In November 2020, pursuant to article 29(2) of the Child Act, the Ministry of Education signed a “Regulation on behaviour control in educational institutions” (unofficial translation). The Regulation prohibits physical and psychological punishment in all educational institutions (chapter 4). Paragraph 3 defines educational institutions as preschool, basic, secondary schools, Quranic schools as well as interim institutions such as industrial education centres, agricultural schools, adult education and disabled education (unofficial translation). The Regulation includes a list of positive discipline methods (chapter 5) and provides for sanctions (chapter 6). Corporal punishment is also explicitly prohibited in basic schools (for ages 6-13) in Khartoum State under Decree No. 10 (2010).

Penal institutions

Corporal punishment is unlawful as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions. The Miscellaneous Amendments Law 2020 repeals “whipping by way of discipline” and replaces it with probation and community service. The Miscellaneous Amendments Law 2020 also amends articles 25,68,69,80,81, 125, 148(2), 151,155,156 and 174 of the Criminal Code 1991 to repeal flogging as disciplinary measure.

Sentence for crime

Corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for crime. The Miscellaneous Amendments Law 2020 repeals whipping by way of discipline and as a sentence for crime. Whipping is replaced with probation and community service (article 47 (b)). Articles 25,68,69,80,81, 125, 148(2), 151,155,156 and 174 of the Criminal Code 1991 are amended to repeal flogging as a sentence for crime.

Article 77 of the Child Act 2010 also states that in sentencing a child the court must “give due regard” to the principle that “the sentence of whipping is not inflicted on the child”. The Child Act 2010 states that it prevails over any other law where there is inconsistency (art. 3), which was confirmed by the Supreme Court in relation to the provision prohibiting sentencing children to the death penalty.²

¹ 6 December 2017, CRPD/C/SDN/Q/1/Add.1, Reply to list of issues, para. 12

² Information provided by the Child Rights Institute, February 2017

(Source: End Corporal Punishment – [Country Report for Sudan](#), last updated February 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.6.2. Situation

Does domestic violence against children (e.g., battery, sexual or other physical abuse in the household, incest, violence/crimes committed against children in the name of honour, psychological abuse, etc.) take place?

Following interviews with 39 human rights defenders and woman human rights defenders between July 2020 and June 2021, DefendDefenders highlighted the following incident of child abuse:

“In March 2021, 13-year-old Samah al-Hadi was shot three times and run over by a car, allegedly by her father, after she requested to transfer schools. Despite the fact that neighbours told police that the father was known to abuse his children, he was released without charge. No post-mortem was carried out and the father was given permission to quickly bury Samah’s body. The case caused outrage on social media in Sudan, with a petition to re-open the police file amassing close to 3,000 signatures. Many women spoke out online, recounting times that they had been subject to violence at home – drawing attention to the high rates of domestic violence in Sudan, where it is not specifically covered by law. Those who have spoken out about Samah’s death have faced harassment online and reprisals from the government.”

(Source: DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) – [An unfinished revolution: The situation of women human rights defenders in Sudan](#), December 2021, Post-Revolution Climate for WHRDS, pg. 50, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan outlines statistics on child discipline:

“[...] In the MICS, respondents to the household questionnaire were asked a series of questions on the methods adults in the household used to discipline a selected child during the past month prior to the survey.⁴⁶ [...] 63.9 percent of children age 1-14 years was subjected to at least one form of psychological or physical punishment by household members during the past month prior to the survey.

Generally, households employ a combination of violent disciplinary practices, reflecting caregivers’ motivation to control children’s behaviour by any means possible. While 52.8 percent of children experienced psychological aggression, about 61.3 percent experienced physical punishment. The most severe forms of physical punishment (hitting the child on the head, ears or face or hitting the child hard and repeatedly) are overall less common: 13.6 percent of children were subjected to severe punishment.

The survey reveals no variations between male and female children who were subjected to physical discipline: male (61.6 percent) and female children (60.8 percent). Differentials with respect to many of the background variables were relatively small. Children living in rural areas (62.3 percent), while those living urban areas (68.2 percent), while those living in the richest households (71.6 percent) were likely than those living in poor households (54.1 percent) of children to be subjected to any violent discipline method.

Overall, 52.8 percent of children in the aged group 1-14 years experienced psychological aggression in the month preceding the survey. River Nile state was reported of having the highest proportion (69.6 percent) and Central Darfur state (12.6 percent) the lowest of the children aged 1-14 years who experienced psychological aggression. Children between 10-14 years were slightly more likely to experience non-violent discipline than the other age groups (23.8 percent).”

46 The Child Labour module and the Child Discipline module were administered using random selection of a single child in all households with one or more children age 1-17 (See Appendix F: Questionnaires). The Child Labour module was administered if the selected child was age 5-17 and the Child Discipline module if the child was age 1-14 years old. To account for the random selection, the household sample weight is multiplied by the total number of children age 1-17 in each household.

(Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan – [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan](#), February 2016, pg. 201, last accessed 24 May 2024)

8.7. Child labour and other forms of exploitation

8.7.1. Legislation

Is there legislation and policy protecting children from child labour? (In chronological order)

The national Children’s Act 2010 states the prohibition of forced labour:

“Employment of Children in forced labour prohibited

46. (1) There shall be committed an offence whoever employ Children in traffic in slavery, of all the forms thereof; and no Child shall be enslaved, or subjected to forced labour, or compelling him to perform work by force.

(2) Whoever smuggle or assist in smuggling any child or children across borders for the purpose of forced labour, in traffic, compelling use, or use any form of violence”.

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), Sudan, 10 February 2010, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to International Labour Organization, the Sudanese laws and regulations about children’s work are conflicted, therefore the responsibility to keep away the children from work is their parents:

“Contributing factors: legislation and policy – Several factors contribute to pushing children into child labour. First of all, the legal framework in Sudan that governs children’s work includes conflicting laws and regulations. In the qualitative interviews it became clear that stakeholders, including government officials, are not aware of what the exact rules are. In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Administrative Reform does not currently have the capacity to conduct inspections, or follow-up on reports in the target locations. Therefore, child labour goes unchecked. Because of this lack of government capacity, it is widely assumed within the community that a child’s parents ultimately hold responsibility for keeping their child away from child labour.”

(Source: International Labour Organization – [Child Labour Among Forcibly Displaced and Host Communities: East Darfour and West Kordofan States, Sudan](#), 11 October 2021, pg. iii, last accessed 23 May 2024)

What is the legal working age and are the standards enforced?

The national Children’s Act 2010 states that the age of a working child is between 14 and 18 years:

“Working Child”, means the Child, who practises work, and his age is between fourteen and eighteen years”;

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), Sudan, 10 February 2010, pg. 3, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Minimum Age Convention (1973) is about the minimum work age. Sudan ratified this Convention the 07 March 2003 and specified the minimum working age as 14 years old:

“Article 1

Each Member for which this Convention is in force undertakes to pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons”.

(Source: International Labour Organisation – [C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

“Sudan

Minimum age specified: 14 years

Date: 07 March 2003

Status: In force”

(Source: International Labour Organisation – [Ratifications of C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is child prostitution prohibited by law? What happens to children who have been involved in prostitution?(in chronological order)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, ratified by Sudan in 1990, emphasises the responsibility of States to take measures to prohibit child prostitution:

“Article 34

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials”.

(Source: Humanium – [Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989](#), article 34, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Optional Protocol to the Child’s Rights Convention, concerning the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000), ratified by Sudan in 2004, says in its Article 1 that States Parties shall prevent child prostitution:

“Article 1

States Parties shall prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography as provided for by the present Protocol”.

(Source: United Nations – [Optional Protocol to the Child’s Rights Convention, concerning the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#), pg. 2, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The national Children’s Act 2010 states that the use of children in prostitution is prohibited:

“Chapter IX Exploitation of Children in Prostitution,
Pornographic Materials and Forced Labour

Use of Children in prostitution and pornographic materials prohibited[...]

45. (e) employment of Children, for the purpose of sexual activities, for remuneration, or any of the forms of consideration.[...]” (pg. 25)

The Children’s Act also states that children who have been the victims of exploitation shall receive physical and psychological rehabilitation and shall be socially re-accommodated:

“Children re-accommodation and rehabilitation

47.(1) The Ministry shall take appropriate measures to achieve the physical and psychological rehabilitation, and social re-accommodation of the Child, who is the victim of any of the forms of neglect, exploitation, abuse, torture, or any of the forms of harsh treatment, or severe, inhuman, or degrading punishment, or armed conflicts.

(2) Such rehabilitation and re-accommodation shall be conducted in such environment, as may strengthen the Child health, and self and dignity respect". (pg. 26)

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children's Act, 2010](#), Sudan, 10 February 2010, pp. 25-26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.7.2. Situation

Do child labour and slavery take place?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

"[...]when it comes [...] to [the] worst forms of child labour is also an issue in Sudan, particularly mining, in particular in South Kordofan and Darfur part where children have been involved in mine working in quite early age. And in some of the areas, like in South Kordofan, you find this [even] impacted access to education because a significant number of children [are] being dropped out. Just because of Child labour and better pay.[...] Mainly to use mining and also maybe in agricultural fields. But this is for us [...] like a practice where the families send their child to work in [the] agriculture field or in rearing animals. But this is not as significant as mining because now they expose even to dangerous materials [...] impact even their future health."

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

The African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies reported that:

"Ransom for Survival

Al-Tayeb, a traditional miner, reported that in late June 2023, a mine owner in Mount Amer sold three girls for 1.5 billion Sudanese pounds. These girls were then sexually exploited in exchange for money from others. This brought the total number of girls to 16, including 5 minors, at the beginning of July 2023 in the infamous "Khor Jehnam" or "Jim" area, which is considered one of the prohibited neighborhoods for the love of hearts. He added that the area was once a market for alcohol and weapons, and has now become a market for sexual slavery for kidnapped girls. He expressed concern about the seriousness of the situation of these girls.

The father of one of the surviving girls, who traveled to the city of Kabkabiya after he managed to free his daughter with the help of relatives of the kidnapper, said that he stayed in contact with the family of the kidnapper for more than a week before he managed to free his daughter, who had been missing since the second half of May 2023.

"The survivor revealed through her family that she and others had been abducted from Khartoum, south of Sudan, by armed members of the RSF on 17 May 2023. She confirmed that they had been raped in Kabkabiya several times before being exposed to sex markets in Khor Geheham, and that others had been smuggled into West Darfur."

The report continued:

"Women are Victims of Sexual Violence in Sudan's wars

In recent history, there has been a strong sense of solidarity among the first wives in Sudan with the abducted women who were taken as sexual slaves or second wives.[...]"

(Source: African Centre for Justice & Peace Studies – [Sexual Slavery in Khor Jahannam, January 2024](#), pg. 9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the 2021 child protection report from UNICEF, the occurrence of child labour is 18 per cent:

“CHILD PROTECTION SITUATION

Children of Sudan are deprived largely due to socio-economic factors, hazards and shocks that leave them at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse. According to the 2019 State of the World’s Children Report (SOWC), the occurrence of child labour is 18 per cent (20 per cent boys and 16 per cent girls) [...]”. (Source: UNICEF – [Sudan Child Protection 2021](#), 31 March 2022, pg. 6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In 2021, The Borgen Project wrote that even if child labour has been banned by the government, it is often unenforced in the informal sector:

“Child Labor and Overwhelmed Schools

[...]

The government banned child labor but often leaves the ban unenforced in the informal sector. About 25% of Sudanese children participate in child labor. Common jobs for children are trading and carpentry. In Khartoum, Sudan, children earn \$1 to \$1.50 per day. [...]”.

(Source: The Borgen Project – [The fight against child poverty in Sudan](#), 20 March 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do debt bondage and other forms of forced labour take place?

The US Department of State’s report about trafficking provides that various forms of forced child labour take place. Whilst the report does not specifically address debt bondage, it provides important context on forms of forced labour in the current situation in Sudan:

“TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Sudan, and traffickers exploit victims from Sudan at home and abroad. Traffickers exploit homeless children in Khartoum – including Sudanese and unaccompanied migrant children from West and Central Africa – in forced labor for begging, market vending, and in sex trafficking. Business owners, informal mining operators, community members, and farmers exploit children working in brick-making factories, gold mining, collecting medical waste, street vending, and agriculture [...]”.

(Source: US DOS – [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 2023, no page number available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to International Labour Organization, there is little specific information regarding debt bondage:

“Prevalence: worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work – The assessment also touched on the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work. However, owing to the general nature of the assessment, little specific data was found on slavery, trafficking of children, debt bondage, serfdom, children in armed conflict, sexual exploitation of children, or the involvement of children in illicit activities [...]”.

(Source: ILO – [Child Labour Among Forcibly Displaced and Host Communities: East Darfour and West Kordofan States, Sudan](#), 11 October 2021, pg. lii, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there reports on the use of children in prostitution or pornography, or on the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trading?

According to International Labour Organization, there is little specific information regarding the use of children in prostitution and the use of children in illicit activities:

“Prevalence: worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work – The assessment also touched on the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work. However, owing to the general nature of the assessment, little specific data was found on slavery, trafficking of children, debt bondage, serfdom, children in armed conflict, sexual exploitation of children, or the involvement of children in illicit activities [...]”.

(Source: ILO – [Child Labour Among Forcibly Displaced and Host Communities: East Darfour and West Kordofan States, Sudan](#), 11 October 2021, pg. lii, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is a child’s full development and education inhibited by the kind of labour performed?

According to the 2021 child protection report from UNICEF, the child’s development is negatively impacted by child labour:

“CHILD PROTECTION SITUATION
[...]

Child labour restricts children’s access to education and exposes them to work that is age-inappropriate, dangerous or harmful for their development [...]”.

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan Child Protection 2021](#), 31 March 2022, pg. 6, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is the labour likely to harm the health and safety of a child?

According to the International Labour Organization, some work activities are likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children:

“[...] Work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children is considered hazardous work or hazardous child labour. Guidance on some hazardous work activities which should be prohibited are included in Article 3 of ILO Recommendation No. 190:

- work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;
- work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;
- work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;
- work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night, or where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.¹² [...]”

¹² ILO, “What is child labour”, www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm.

(Source: ILO – [Child Labour Among Forcibly Displaced and Host Communities: East Darfour and West Kordofan States, Sudan](#), 11 October 2021, pg. 11, last accessed 23 May 2024)

8.8. Children living and/or working on the streets

Are there reports of children living and/or working on the streets being harassed, ill-treated and/or arrested by police or other state agents (or others) and on the treatment they receive upon and after arrest?

Current information on how street children are treated by officials and others is very limited. It is important to note that the absence of information is not information of absence, especially considering the ongoing conflict and displacement of millions of people.

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“In Khartoum they are known as “street children” or the local reference to them is “shammasa”, they have been in Khartoum for many years but there is a surge in their numbers recently. It was unfortunate that the war expanded to Al Jazira state, because that’s where most people fled, becoming the second most populated state in Sudan affected by the war. I read a number of stories of children who were displaced from Khartoum, to Al Jazira, then to Qadarif, they have lost contact with their parents.

[...] Before the war [street children] were at risk of all sorts of exploitations and abuses, mostly because a great number of them lost contact with their families. Those who are in contact with their families, they come from very poor environments who didn’t care for them but rather viewed them as burdens to get rid of. So these kids were ‘used’ in all sorts of ways; I remember in earlier years they were used in demonstrations and wars, which is terrible, they were also used for heavy labor while being paid very little, they are also exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation because they are in the streets and have no sorts of protection, no education, no awareness, nor an interest by the government [to provide support to them], nor provide the needed resources to tackle an issue of this magnitude. Every now and then a number of these children were taken [by the government] and put in schools, or the juvenile rehabilitation prisons, but many would escape and return to the streets. I remember some NGOs that worked with them through volunteerism, teaching them a craft or teaching them sports or football, a small number would escape street life but the greater number would return to it. They are also at risk of getting addicted to drugs (both local and imported) and alcohol, so they were already at risk of abuse and exploitation, and the worst of all, using them to fight in war.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

In its last annual report, the US Department of state says that children living on the streets, and who committed a crime, are sent to government camps by police:

“[...] Institutionalized Children: Police typically sent homeless children who had committed crimes to government camps for indefinite periods. Health care, schooling, and living conditions were generally very basic in these camps [...]”.

(Source: US DOS – [Annual report on human rights in 2022](#), 20 March 2023, pg. 27, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are children living and/or working on the streets in danger of forced recruitment in armed forces (regular or non-state)?

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information when asked about recruitment practices of displaced children in Sudan:

“Of course the RSF, at the beginning of the war, the clearer picture that was visible, the information that we were receiving and the media reports we were seeing and hearing, the RSF is using them more. The army, even if we have reservations towards it, it’s an old institution that has more or less traditions or procedures when recruiting fighters; it’s not easy for children to be recruited. However, at RSF, the nature of recruiting fighters is different, it is based on tribal relations and tempting them by offering money. Even before the war, people saw many children in military

trucks. There is a photo that I posted on Twitter, photos of children in military vehicles after the war in Khartoum, with the RSF definitely more.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

In the study *“Reasons for leaving home and pattern of child abuse and substance misuse among street children in Khartoum, Sudan: a cross-sectional survey”* in which two hundred and seventy-five (275) street children were interviewed to gather insights into their experiences and the challenges they face, the author noted that:

“Street children are often exploited and exposed to a wide range of abusive victimization, threatening their health and well-being. Being on the streets most of the time makes them particularly more vulnerable. These adversities frequently lead to serious physical and mental health issues or even premature death⁵. The increased propensity towards antisocial and violent behavior has been well documented among street children⁶. Abandoned children form gangs, create their own argots, and engage in petty thefts, prostitution, and commercial sexual exploitation. Information on street children is deficient in Sudan.”

⁵ Embleton L, Ayuku D, Makori D, Kamanda A, Braitstein P. Causes of death among street-connected children and youth in Eldoret, Kenya. *BMC Int Health Hum Rights*. 2018;18(1):19. [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]

⁶ Aufseeser D. *Conflict, Violence and Peace*. 2017. Street Children and Everyday Violence; pp. 109–127. [[Google Scholar](#)]

(Source: PanAfrican Medical Journal, Ali Hassan, Suha Mohammed Elhassan et al. *“Reasons for leaving home and pattern of child abuse and substance misuse among street children in Khartoum, Sudan: a cross-sectional survey.”* The Pan African medical journal vol. 46 36. 25 Sep. 2023, doi:10.11604/pamj.2023.46.36.33887, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF, in a press release from October 2023, reports the recruitment of unaccompanied and separated children living on the streets by armed groups:

“[...]. “The deteriorating humanitarian situation and lack of access to food and other basic services make children, especially unaccompanied and separated children on the streets, easy targets for recruitment by armed groups,” Mullally said. [...]”

(Source: UNICEF – [Sudan: UN expert warns of child recruitment by armed forces](#), 16 October 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there any shelters for them? Are there any organisations involved in the protection of children living and/or working on the streets?

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“There are no organisations which would dare be on the streets in Khartoum. And there are none that have dared to return to Darfur. The extent of the RSF violence, now extending to Wad Madani, is such that I don’t think we’re going to see any large humanitarian organisation presence. [...] Shelters were provided to a very limited extent prior to the fighting that began in April 2023. But there were a tremendous number of homeless children on the streets of Khartoum just scratching out a living. There were obviously no shelters nearly comparable to the need. So I would say effectively negligible assistance.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In this article *“Sudan: About 7,600 Children Fleeing Homes Daily In World’s Largest Child Displacement Crisis”*, published in November 2023, Save the Children reported that:

“[...]About 7,600¹ children are fleeing their homes daily in Sudan, according to new analysis by Save the Children, with seven months of conflict causing havoc and horror across much of the country and one eighth of children now displaced.”

¹ Based on the latest IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix for Sudan snapshot dated 21 November, which shows that the number of IDPs because of the current conflict increased from 4.4 million to 5.1 million between 30 September and 15 November. The share of children is based on the latest monthly displacement overview from IOM which found that 53% of IDPs in Sudan were children. This figure was then divided by the number of days in the period (46) to come to the average of about 7,600 per day.

(Source: Save the Children – [Sudan: About 7,600 Children Fleeing Homes Daily In World’s Largest Child Displacement Crisis](#), 28 November 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)



Returnees, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and Returns

9. Refugees and internally displaced people (IDP)

How many unaccompanied and separated refugee children are in Sudan and registered?

In a series of written responses to questions sent by Asylos for this report, Asma Taha a Humanitarian Practitioner/Expert indicated in June 2024 that:

“There is no accurate data on the numbers of unaccompanied and separated children in Sudan and especially after the conflict outbreak on 15th of April 2023. The numbers of UASC in the camp settings or settlement areas are available since there is a coordinated structure for providing child protection services by humanitarian actors including the identification of UASC, if we take the example in Gedarif states the numbers are available in the refugee camp in and in the IDP settlements, however if we try to have an accurate number from the responsible government body which is the state Council for Child welfare they don’t have an accurate number or able to coordinate the collection of data, and let me refer to a capacity building needs assessment done by one of the lead Child Protection International organizations (attached as reference , and not for share) in 2022 and is focused on the area of refugee and migrants children that highlights the gaps in the capacity of the government institutions to deal with child protection issues including UASC and this is the case for Gedarif state where a camp infrastructure is present and there is a high presence of both UN and International and local NGOs which is to a large extent a better case, but in the case of other states that didn’t have humanitarian structure in place and are currently affected by the conflict or are receiving influx of the displaced populations it is almost impossible to have rough figures.”

(Source: Asma Taha, [written communication with Asylos](#), 2 June 2024)

The UNHCR in its 2023 mid-year report explains that prior to the beginning of the ongoing conflict, 621 unaccompanied or separated refugee children have been identified. However, after the 15 April 2023, 6551 refugee children recognised as unaccompanied or separated minors:

“Sub-Sector: Child Protection

Pre-April 15th

Partners delivered child protection response across 11 refugee hosting states of Sudan in the period of 01 January to 15 April, including in Central, East, North and South Darfur, South and West Kordofan, Blue and White Nile, Khartoum, Gedaref and Kassala. In this period, 477 refugee boys and girls received individual case management, and 621 refugee children were identified as unaccompanied or separated minors (UASCs), 119 children with disabilities were reached with direct services to improve their care and wellbeing, and 372 women, men, boys, and girls of community-based child protection structures received CP training.

Post-April 15th

Child Protection response is critical in the conflict-setting to mitigate and respond to acute risks, including but not limited to risks of trafficking, recruitment by armed groups, exploitation, and family separation. There has been a significant rise in unaccompanied and separated minors (UASCs) after April 15th, including separations during flight from conflict hotspots, compounded by gaps in family tracing and reunification services in insecure areas, partner capacities and available resources. 6,551 unaccompanied and separated refugee children have been identified, with the majority in White Nile State. 183 UASCs have received appropriate interim or long-term alternative care, and 476 refugee children have received individual case management.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan Country Response Plan \(January-June 2023 Mid Year Report\)](#), 13 September 2023, pg. 16, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Which countries have they fled?

In an interview we conducted in February 2024, with Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, Mathilde provided which countries refugees have fled into Sudan from:

“So you have a population of something like 950,000 refugees inside the country of different nationalities. The biggest representation is South Sudanese, then you have Eritrean, then it’s Ethiopian. Then you also have smaller communities of Syrians, and then after a bunch of other people. So really, Sudan, before the war, was a country of asylum. [...] So at the beginning of the first eight months of the war, the largest number of people crossing into South Sudan were actually South Sudanese nationals, registered or unregistered refugees. Now, the trend is a little bit more nuanced and you have more and more Sudanese as well crossing into [White Nile]. And it’s the same for the Ethiopian and Eritrean. We don’t really know the number of returnees. My experience having met with Eritreans, especially, is that there’s a lot of Eritreans that have decided to remain in Sudan because there is just zero option for them to go back to Eritrea where they would be at risk.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information when asked about countries refugees in Sudan fled from:

“Most of the children seeking refuge in Sudan come from Western neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, Nigeria. And those who come from Eastern neighbouring countries like Eritrea and Ethiopia, from Southern borders come from South Sudan. To be honest those groups are not covered well in the media, because they live in bad conditions, on the margins of the capital. We heard some Ethiopians returned to Ethiopia, and some left Khartoum and moved to other cities [in Sudan]. But there is no information, no statistics, no proper news coverage, for sure their problems are bigger and their suffering is worse, they have gone from bad conditions to worse.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

Corroborating what the information that the above interviewees provided, UNHCR reported on its Operational Data Portal, reported that:

“In March 2023, Sudan reached the highest number of refugee and asylum seekers in the year with 1,144,675. South Sudanese make the majority. Many others fled violence and persecution in neighbouring countries, including Eritrea, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Chad, but also the wars in Syria and Yemen pushed people to seek safety in Sudan. Most refugees lived in out-of-camp settings, host communities and urban areas, while others stay in camps, especially in East Sudan and White Nile State.

Since April 15th, the conflict has forced refugees in Sudan and millions of Sudanese to a forced displacement within the country and beyond Sudan borders. Some of them have faced multiple forced displacement within Sudan and in some extend out of the country.

Ongoing forced displacements have been tracked by mechanisms jointly put in place by competent government entities, UNHCR and its partners. Analysis showed that the forced displacements remain for the majority a self-relocation to safer areas within Sudan. Most of this caseload has been received in White Nile State (74%), eastern states (17%) and others (9%).

UNHCR Sudan and neighbouring country operations have put in place feedback mechanisms to identify refugees and asylum seekers, earlier registered in Sudan and who have crossed borders to other countries. Such mechanisms allow refugee records updates in PRIMES and give opportunity of transferring histories of identified refugees to receiving end where they will continue benefiting protection.

Within Sudan, UNHCR has sought to register the internal displacement of refugees and asylum seekers in a phased approach, contingent to the security environment. Estimates were generally used to support the emergency response at the onset of the crisis. In a subsequent phase, registration teams in field offices have deployed efforts on population fixing through verification of past enrolment, new registrations, and consequently issuing refugees documentation.”

Refugees and Asylum seekers by age and gender ⁵⁴ source: UNHCR, COR, IPP	
Country of Origin	Population
South Sudan	696,246
Eritrea	147,209
Ethiopia	69,573
Syrian Arab Rep	26,582
Central African Rep	18,279
Various	1,599
Yemen	1,564
Chad	941

(Source: UNHCR – [Operational Data Portal](#), last accessed 4th February 2024)

How many children have fled their country with their family?

UNHCR reported on its Operational Data Portal, which was last updated 31 Dec 2023, there are 961,993 refugees and asylum seekers, below is the data for children between 0-17 years:

Refugees and Asylum seekers by age and gender ⁵⁵ source: UNHCR, COR, IPP		
	Male	Female
0-4 years	3.9%	3.5%
5-11 years	11.9%	9.0%
12-17 years	6.6%	6.5%

(Source: UNHCR – [Operational Data Portal](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Where do refugee children live?

In a series of written responses to questions sent by Asylos for this report, Asma Taha a Humanitarian Practitioner/Expert indicated in June 2024 that:

“Refugee children are scattered all over Sudan being one of the largest refugee hosting countries with more than 1M refugee, prior to the conflict the majority of refugees lived in Khartoum and Depends on their country of origin South Sudanese for example were mainly located on Khartoum and White Nile, Ethiopian and Eritrean Refugees and the refugees from the East and Horn of Africa were mainly located in Gedarif State, Kassala where the two states has camp infrastructure established decades ago and Khartoum while for the Refugees from Chad and Central Africa Republic they are mainly in the Darfur Region, mainly Western Darfur state and South Darfur state respectively.

⁵⁴ For usability, Asylos has sourced this data from the UNHCR’s website and presented it in this table.

⁵⁵ For usability, Asylos has sourced this data from the UNHCR’s website and presented it in this table.

Kindly refer to [UNHCR Refugees and Asylum Seekers data hub](#) where [it] highlights the refugee population per state prior and post conflict.

The post conflict reality shows that the refugees from South Sudan has moved from Khartoum and the conflict affected areas to the South Sudanese refugee camps in White Nile state (has borders with South Sudan) state while others has returned to South Sudan according to IOM DTM where 80% of the non-Sudanese nationals who crossed the border to South Sudan where South Sudanese nationals. For the case of Ethiopians, Eritreans, Congolese refugees and the refugees from the East and horn of Africa the majority fled Khartoum to the Eastern States mainly Kassala and Gedarif where the refugees from Syria and Yemen were reportedly fled Khartoum to Red Sea State (please refer to the needs assessment done after the conflict outbreak)."

(Source: Asma Taha, [written communication with Asylos](#), 2 June 2024)

Ramona's colleague, Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that the context the conflict and present:

"[...]Sudan, before the war, was a country of asylum. Before the war, the refugees were either in refugee camps in the east of the country in Gedaref and Kassala for Eritrean and Ethiopian, or in the south of the country in White Nile, South Kordofan, and to some extent, a little bit also in North Darfur with South Sudanese. There was also a large number of refugees and people who were unregistered in the capital of Khartoum. So when the war started and basically the capital was shattered and became a war zone, you have all that community of refugees that had to flee Khartoum. [...] Eritreans and Ethiopians went to the East in Kassala. What you have to understand as well is that they were not really given the choice, meaning that it's not like they could go, for example, and stop in another city. The government of Sudan imposes that actually they are directed to camps, and unless they return to the country of origin, which some of them did, they have no option but to remain in camps. So there is an encampment policy being imposed on refugees, and that has been quite reinforced since the war. And that obviously includes all the children there.[...]."

Mathilde continued to explain that:

"[...]the issue of shelter for refugees was complicated, especially in the beginning of the war because a lot of refugees were sort of in transit in intermediary cities before they were transferred to camp. And here I would say forcibly transferred to camps. So they were definitely in difficult condition[s] like everybody else's, IDPs as well were living in collective shelters in schools and sometimes also in the street as they were fleeing Khartoum. There's been some efforts done by humanitarian organisations, including ours NRC [the Norwegian Refugee Council] to build new houses. So for example, in the camps of Um Gargour in Gedaref, which is a camp that welcomes Eritrean and Ethiopians, NRC was the one providing emergency shelter for newer arrivals from Khartoum. Same in the camp of Um Rakuba in Gedaref. There's one camp in the Further East, Babikri that hasn't received a lot of support. The big issue is for the ones who went to White Nile, which has already also a lot of-- so it already has 10 refugee camps that were also at maximum capacity. And in some of the refugee camps, the population has doubled. So the last time I was there in October, I have seen seven refugee family, for example, sharing one family tent inside a camp because they had newly arrived or arrived over this past three, four months into the camp, and there was just not enough support, not enough space, and not enough resources to actually allocate them with a shelter that is more dignified. So it's definitely an issue."

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information when asked about refugee children in Sudan and their displacement since the war:

"Most people were displaced to the East, closer to Ethiopia and Eritrea, so for example Kasala and Gadarif, there are common tribes between Sudan and Eritrea/Ethiopia. The schools there also have turned into shelters, most or all schools in Gadarif are filled with displaced persons who have fled from Khartoum or Madani or other places, so in

these areas Eritreans and Ethiopians have relatives who have settled in Sudan for long years, mostly their conditions are like Sudanese but worse a bit, because they may face problems with the police, security apparatus and the like.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

UNHCR reported on its Operational Data Portal, which was last updated 31 Dec 2023:

“[...] Ongoing forced displacements have been tracked by mechanisms jointly put in place by competent government entities, UNHCR and its partners. Analysis showed that the forced displacements remain for the majority a self-relocation to safer areas within Sudan. Most of this caseload has been received in White Nile State (74%), eastern states (17%) and others (9%).

UNHCR Sudan and neighbouring country operations have put in place feedback mechanisms to identify refugees and asylum seekers, earlier registered in Sudan and who have crossed borders to other countries. Such mechanisms allow refugee records updates in PRIMES and give opportunity of transferring histories of identified refugees to receiving end where they will continue benefiting protection.

Within Sudan, UNHCR has sought to register the internal displacement of refugees and asylum seekers in a phased approach, contingent to the security environment. Estimates were generally used to support the emergency response at the onset of the crisis. In a subsequent phase, registration teams in field offices have deployed efforts on population fixing through verification of past enrollment, new registrations, and consequently issuing refugees documentation.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Operational Data Portal](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do refugee children have access to education and health services?

In a series of written responses to questions sent by Asylos for this report, Asma Taha a Humanitarian Practitioner/Expert commented in June 2024 that:

“Refugee children have access to both health and education, the main issue remains is the affordability of those services specially for the health services fees or schools materials. For those located in camps and gathering sites UN agencies and NGOs provide free services but for those who are out of those structures the affordability remains a big challenge.”

(Source: Asma Taha, [written communication with Asylos](#), 2 June 2024)

In this snapshot MMC examines refugees and migrants’ movements as a result of the conflict, mainly focusing on Ethiopians and Eritreans who fled to eastern Sudan in 2023, which 43% of respondents were youth (18-24 years of age). The report highlights that while access to cash, healthcare, and housing are widespread issues, the specific needs can vary significantly depending on the location, with Gedaref focusing more on housing and healthcare and Port Sudan on food and water:

“[...]In their current locations, respondents commonly expressed challenges related to access to [...]healthcare (71%) and housing (71%). A vast majority of respondents in Gedaref (n=63) identified housing (62) and healthcare (58) as the main challenges, while in Port Sudan (n=26), food (22), water (22), cash (22) and healthcare (22) were top concerns. [...]”

(Source: The Mixed Migration Centre (MCC) – [Movements, challenges and intentions of refugees and migrants in Eastern Sudan during the conflict in 2023](#), 31 December 2023, pg. 8, last accessed 30 May 2024)

UNHCR in its Protection briefing covering September 2023, reported that:

“[...] 1,200 refugee children under 5 have died in nine camps in White Nile state between 15 May and 14 September due to suspected measles outbreak and high malnutrition. The situation is further exacerbated by the general poor

state of health facilities⁹. In Wadi Halfa, the lack of food and resulting malnutrition among children remains a major concern.

⁹ UNHCR and WHO Joint Press Release, 19 September 2023

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan | Protection Brief - September 2023](#), 10 October 2023, pg. 7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In its situation report about Sudan, the UN OCHA states that more than one thousand refugee children have died from suspected measles and malnutrition between the 15 May and the 12 September 2023:

“HIGHLIGHTS

More than 1,200 refugee children have died in White Nile State due to suspected measles and underlying malnutrition, reports UNHCR

[...]

ANALYSIS

Sudan Humanitarian Update (22 September 2023)

SITUATION OVERVIEW

[...]

Between 15 May and 12 September, 1,222 refugee children under five died in White Nile State, UNHCR reported in its latest Sudan Health and Nutrition Update. Most of the deaths were linked to suspected measles and underlying malnutrition. This is a more than a 120-fold increase on a year-on-year basis. From April to September 2022, there were 10 deaths of refugee children under the age of five in 10 refugee camps/settlements in White Nile State, according to UNHCR. The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Plan International, Save the Children and UNHCR have supported the State Ministry of Health in White Nile to carry out a measles vaccination campaign. About 6,400 children were reached during the first round of the campaign in July, and about 45,500 children under five years (107 per cent of the target) were vaccinated during the second round in August that targeted refugee camps in the state”.

Source: UNOCHA – [Sudan Situation Report](#), 22 September 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UNHCR, in its 2023 mid-year report, states that prior 15 April, 67,987 refugee students were enrolled in primary schools and 5,846 refugee students were enrolled in secondary schools. However, the ongoing conflict has an impact on education programs throughout the country. Regarding the health services, the report provides that before the conflict refugee children were given treatment and micronutrient supplements in order to combat malnutrition:

“EDUCATION

[...]Post April 15th

Forced movements undertaken by all civilians in the face of the ongoing conflict in Sudan has had yielding impact on education programmes across the country. Despite the war however, Eastern and Southern corridors of Sudan were able to complete the primary education school year programmes for refugee students, including in Kassala, Gedaref, Blue Nile, White Nile, and Aj Jazeera. With the shifting of some exam timetables to allow inclusion of displaced populations, primary six state-level examinations were conducted in these states.

In Kassala 2,391 refugee students (1,112 boys, 1,279 girls) successfully completed grade six state-level exams, in Aj Jazeera 35 students (22 boys and 13 girls), including refugee children that fled the conflict in Khartoum. In White Nile, 3,591 refugee children (1,998 boys and 1,593 girls) were supported with exam fees and successfully completed the grade six state-level exams, including 400 refugee children that fled the conflict in Khartoum. According to White Nile state authorities, the in-camp refugee grade six state-level exam passing rate was at 86.9 per cent. (pg. 18)

[...]HEALTH & NUTRITION

[...]

Post April 15th

Malnutrition rates have grown of increasing concern, most notably in refugee camps in White Nile State where emergency levels of malnutrition were identified already pre-conflict by UNHCR via the 2022 Standard Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS). Partners have continued to deliver nutrition programming across accessible refugee-hosting

areas of Sudan, including treatment for MAM and SAM among children under-5 and for pregnant and lactating women, alongside delivery of nutritional supplements. 32,427 refugee children have benefitted from vitamin A supplements, 353 PLW have received treatment for MAM, and 994 children under-5 have received inpatient treatment for SAM.” (pg. 20)

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan Country Response Plan \(January-June 2023 Mid Year Report\)](#), 13 September 2023, pp. 18-20, last accessed 23 May 2024)

How many IDP children are registered?

UNHCR reported on its Operational Data Portal, which was last updated on 29th January 2024, there are 9,052,822 internally displaced persons in Sudan, below is the data for children between 0-17 years:

Internally displaced persons by age ⁵⁶ source: Humanitarian Needs Overview		
	Male	Female
0-4 years	10%	10%
5-11 years	11%	11%
12-17 years	9.0%	10%

(Source: UNHCR – [Operational Data Portal](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Save The Child reports that following the conflict, which began in April 2023, 3.3 million children are now displaced in Sudan:

“[...] At least 7.1 million people, including an estimated 3.3 million children, are now displaced from their homes across Sudan, a number which has nearly doubled since devastating conflict ripped through the country mid-April [...]”.

(Source: Save The Children – [Number of children displaced across Sudan likely the highest in the world](#), 8 September 2023, no page number available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNICEF states then in August 2023, that 470 000 children fled to neighbouring countries and that more than 1,7 million children are internally displaced:

“With more children displaced in past 52 days than in previous four years combined, UNICEF warns that, without peace, the future of Sudan’s children is at stake. At least two million children have been forced from their homes since the conflict in Sudan erupted four months ago – an average of more than 700 children newly displaced every hour. As violence continues to ravage the country, over 1.7 million children are estimated to be on the move within Sudan’s borders and more than 470,000 have crossed into neighbouring countries [...]”.

(Source: UNICEF – [More than two million children displaced by brutal conflict in Sudan as violence spreads to new areas](#), 24 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

56 For usability, Asylos has sourced this data from the UNHCR’s website and presented it in this table.

From which regions do IDP children come?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“Before the war, for displaced children and their families, they [preferred] usually coming to Khartoum. [...] from Darfur, from Kordofan mainly to Khartoum, and Al Jazirah, as well. And there [was] a time when families tried to reintegrate the families with– children with their families, they even [came] again to Khartoum with additional children.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

The UNHCR, through its Operational Data Portal, reports this data that is not segregated by age. Consequently, it remains unclear from which regions in Sudan the internally displaced children originate:

“Internally Displaced Persons by State

Location name	Source	Data date	Population
South Darfur	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	1,606,195
North Darfur	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	1,145,022
Central Darfur	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	794,031
East Darfur	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	766,845
Nile	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	682,755
White Nile	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	538,280
Aj Jazirah	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	518,711
Sennar	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	477,197
Blue Nile	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	419,451
Gedaref	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	396,527
Northern	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	389,600
South Kordofan	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	347,283
West Darfur	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	261,791
West Kordofan	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	251,450
Red Sea	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	234,000
North Kordofan	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	178,638
Kassala	Humanitarian Needs Overview	31 Dec 2023	159,832
Khartoum	Humanitarian Needs Overview	29 Jan 2024	37,870

(Source: UNHCR – [Operational Data Portal](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

According to the 2023 Revised Humanitarian Plan on Sudan consolidated by OCHA, 68 per cent of the displaced population is from the state of Khartoum.

“Displacement
[...]

An estimated 736,200 people have been displaced within Sudan, of which 368,000 are children.⁵ Approximately 68 per cent of the internally displaced population is from Khartoum state, [...]”.

⁵ UNICEF

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan Sudan](#), 17 May 2023, pg. 7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Where do IDP children live?

Meeting Minutes, published by the Global Shelter Cluster, provides a summary of achievements in the cluster's response efforts:

"[...] Around 57,000 households, impacting approximately 300,000 individuals, have been reached through shelter and non-food item (NFI) distribution. Notably, more households were reached with NFIs compared to shelter items. The response has mainly targeted gathering sites, with less coverage in host communities. Most responses have been in-kind rather than cash-based. Activities have been reported in 14 out of 18 states in Sudan, primarily focusing on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. However, there's a call for increased funding to maintain response momentum, as activity levels have declined recently."

(Source: Global Shelter Cluster – [SNFI Cluster Coordination Meeting | Apr. 9, 2024](#), published 20 May 2024, pg. 1, last accessed 2 May 2024)

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information regarding the displacement of children in Sudan:

"The greater number of children, the greater percentage, in Sudan were living in Khartoum. The majority of those in Khartoum had been displaced from conflict-affected areas, for example before the separation of South Sudan, many came from there; after the separation, the greatest number of children were from areas like South Kordofan, south Blue Nile, the five states of Darfur and some states in Kordofan (there are three states in Kordofan some of which are unstable). Of course there are other areas like the north and the centre, but the majority are from those areas. In Khartoum they are known as "street children" or the local reference to them is "shammasa", they have been in Khartoum for many years but there is a surge in their numbers recently. It was unfortunate that the war expanded to Al Jazira state, because that's where most people fled, becoming the second most populated state in Sudan affected by the war. I read a number of stories of children who were displaced from Khartoum, to Al Jazira, then to Qadarif, they have lost contact with their parents. There is a phenomenon where a good percentage of these children were attending Khalwa schools [religious schools that teach children Qur'an], most of the children in Khalwa schools were coming from Western Sudan, there were many of them in Khartoum, and after the war, similarly to other places, these children escaped from Khartoum to Al Jazira and other states and lost contact with their families. [...] Most of the big cities had street children, but as a phenomenon discussed in the media, the focus was on Khartoum. Khartoum's population according to statistics was around 10- 12 million, third of the population were living in Khartoum, so big cities like Port Sudan, Niyala, Madani, the percentage of displaced children is not little but not comparable to the numbers in Khartoum the capital."

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

According to the 2023 Revised Humanitarian Plan on Sudan consolidated by OCHA, some displaced people, including children, flee to neighbouring countries and some others within various parts of Sudan:

"[...] An estimated 736,200 people have been displaced within Sudan, of which 368,000 are children.⁵ Approximately 68 per cent of the internally displaced population is from Khartoum state, with some fleeing to neighboring states and others seeking refuge within the state.⁶ The highest numbers of internally displaced people are in West Darfur, White Nile and Northern states. These new displacements are in addition to the almost 3.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)⁷, primarily concentrated in Darfur, prior to the new fighting.

An estimated 220,000 people have fled into neighbouring countries – notably to Egypt, South Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic.⁸ [...]"

5 UNICEF

6 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, 5 May 2023

7 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, November 2022

8 IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, 7 May 2023

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan Sudan](#), 17 May 2023, pg. 7, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do IDP children have access to education and health services?

Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a Sudanese journalist whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared this information regarding access of children to education and health services in Sudan:

“The biggest problem facing children is education for sure. About 19 million children are out of schools now. Education is almost at a halt, even schools in Egypt aren’t able to progress because they follow the Sudanese curriculum. Some families in Egypt had to move their children to Egyptian schools because of this problem. The problem is that if they are in advanced grades, like 6th or 7th, it’s not simple to be transferred to the Egyptian curriculum. There is a real problem in regards to education. UNICEF tried in some areas like the north of Sudan and Halfa, to establish educational centres, and utilise electronic devices to assist the learning process but they are simple attempts that don’t respond to the gravity of the need, it doesn’t even cover 1% of the children. This is the real catastrophe. The second catastrophe is the lack of access to healthcare services. No one knows what is happening to children’s health, particularly in the area of malnutrition. Children at the age of growth, there’s problems in their nutrition, their education, their healthcare services, this is a serious problem.”

(Source: Hassan Ahmed Berkia, [interview record](#), 4 February 2024)

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“[...] the schools [have been] shut down since the beginning of the war. So currently, unless humanitarian organisations. Like ours, for example, creates a small, temporary program for learn[ers] and so on in temporary learning centres. They will not have access to education. And even the offer that is given from the humanitarian community, it’s temporary and doesn’t replace any formal education. So at the moment, no children in Sudan [have] access to education. I would put a caveat, actually, for the Ethiopian refugees in the camps because we’ve been able to maintain some type of education services to them as NRC, in a more it was a program that we were running before the war, and we were able to maintain that, actually, throughout. That would be the only exception. And in terms of access to health, you have something like 70% of the health facilities in conflict zone[s] that are shut down, according to WHO.⁵⁷

“[...] So basically, just consider that healthcare has collapsed in the country, and there’s no significant access to health. It’s particularly the case in areas controlled by the RSF and areas basically that are contested. I believe that there’s only two functioning Phoenix or Medical Center in the capital at the moment where there are still people trapped there and very little across the country. Obviously, a huge issue noting that Sudan is going through a cholera outbreak on top of measles. There was a measles outbreak earlier in the year and had already quite a fragile profile when it comes to access to it.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

⁵⁷ WHO, [Regional Director statement on the health crisis in Sudan](#), 21 November 2023

UNHCR in its Protection briefing covering September 2023, reported that:

“[...]Windle Trust International continues to provide counselling and psychosocial support as well as child safeguarding training sessions in White Nile, Kassala and Gedaref for displaced students from Khartoum.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan | Protection Brief – September 2023](#), 10 October 2023, pg. 12, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Meanwhile, the US Department of state in its last annual report says that internally displaced children do not often have access to health services and education:

“Displaced Children: Internally displaced children often lacked access to government services such as health care and education due to security concerns and an inability to pay related fees [...]”.

(Source: US DOS – [Annual report on human rights in 2022](#), 20 March 2023, pg. 27, last accessed 23 May 2024)

10. Returning separated or unaccompanied children and families to Sudan

10.1. Return agreements

Which countries have signed return agreements with Sudan?

The following excerpts from The Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) BAMF, and UNHCR, explain the situation of voluntary return and repatriation of refugees to Sudan, highlighting the impact of the ongoing security situation and their responses:

“Since June 26, 2023, a decision and departure moratorium has been in force for Sudan. On December 19, 2023, the State Secretary decided to extend this decision and departure moratorium by six months until July 8, 2024. Independent return is currently not possible due to the closure of the airport in Khartoum as a result of violence between paramilitaries and the army, especially around the capital Khartoum. Forced return is (temporarily) not possible due to developments in Sudan.”

(Source: Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek⁵⁸ – [Sudan](#), 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

“[...] the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announces that the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) is extending the designation of Sudan for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months, beginning on October 20, 2023, and ending on April 19, 2025. This extension allows existing TPS beneficiaries to retain TPS through April 19, 2025, so long as they otherwise continue to meet the eligibility requirements for TPS.”

(Source: Federal Register – [Extension and Redesignation of Sudan for Temporary Protected Status](#), 21 August 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

“Due to the current security situation in Sudan, assisted voluntary return to Sudan through the REAG/GARP 2.0 program implemented by IOM has been suspended until further notice.”

(Source: BAMF – [Voluntary return to countries of origin](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

“No voluntary repatriation to Sudan has been recorded since March 2019 (repatriation of 1,869 individuals through the Tina border crossing point in North Darfur after the signing of the 2017 Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR and the Governments of Sudan and Chad).”

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan-Returnees in Sudan](#), 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

⁵⁸ The Dutch Repatriation and Departure Service

Whilst UNHCR, references an agreement it signed in May 2017 with the governments of Chad and Sudan:

“In May 2017, UNHCR and the Governments of Chad and Sudan signed a Tripartite Agreement outlining the legal framework to ensure the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of refugees from Chad. The agreement provides the basis for UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation (volrep) programme.

(Source: Reliefweb, UNHCR – [UNHCR Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Update](#), 22 January 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

10.2. Family tracing/family reunification for unaccompanied and separated children in country of origin

Is family reunification possible and how is the prospect of family reunification assessed and by whom, in terms of whether it is in the best interests of the child?

In an interview with Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer and Ramona Padurean, an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, Mathilde explained the situation of returns to Sudan:

““[...]So the only family tracing services that I’ve heard of, is from the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross].[...]So at the moment, there’s no return, really. There’s only very ad hoc reports of people forced to return to, for example, Khartoum. I’ve met with several families who had been displaced in the east who told me that their fellow relatives of so-and-so, had to leave the displacement sites where they were, the gathering sites where they were, and return back to Khartoum because the living conditions were so difficult in the east. They had little access to services, no way of livelihood, and they were living basically in classrooms with other people and other families. And they took the risk to go back to Khartoum with the family. The few cases that I heard of, it was mostly men going back, but also to check the house. But I also heard about families. I think that it’s not being monitored at the moment. It’s very difficult to do this, so there’s no data on that. And I would say at the moment, it remains anecdotal when it comes to this type of returns. What is sure is that once they return, there [are] literally zero services available.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Her colleague and Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist, Ramona Padurean followed up and further explained:

“And yes, and to add a bit of what Mathilde was saying, oftentimes, when we do reach that stage in that phase of the conflict where, let’s say, returns are possible. So we’re thinking beyond the pendular movements that Mathilde was saying, is when we need to distinguish between these we would call pendular movements when we would have head of the household, or one of the members of the family or a couple of members of the family going in to check on their assets, to check on their integrity, and so on, but not to really with the intention of returning, right. So if the conflict reaches the phase of where returns, albeit even in a few months, may be possible. One of the main barriers to this, or let’s say one of the aspects that needs to be dealt with very carefully are HLP-related issues. So Housing, Land and Property [HLP] issues because secondary occupation may be a problem. Some aspects, HLP issues have actually been weaponized or one of the driving forces of the conflict in said areas. And of course, this is not directly targeted to children, but since they’re caregivers because the whole list impacts the whole household, right. And it represents a barrier for both the caregivers as well as the children to sustainable and safe returns. However, having said that, that’s something that we’ve documented across several other contexts. Currently, the Sudan context is not one that we would have reports of this being yet an issue because I don’t think we are witnessing returns per se, as Mathilde was saying.”

(Source: Ramona Padurean, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Corroborating the information Mathilde and Ramona provided above, Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“It does not exist. If children are reunited, it’s because there has been a— WhatsApp groups have provided information. Families join a WhatsApp group when they figure out where their child is and there’s a possible reunification. There may be immigration to the child. held. But in the chaos that now exists, I don’t think we can say that there really are any resources, counselling services, mediation services. There’s only word of mouth, word of [the] internet. And again, I mentioned earlier that ominously, the internet this morning was down throughout Sudan along with telecommunications, Zain in particular was down. And if it is the case that the Rapid Support Forces with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates have created their own internet service maybe using Starlink, they can afford to shut down communications, both telephonic and web-based communications because they won’t use it. And they know that if the Sudan Armed Forces can’t use it, they’re blind in some important sense to what’s going on. And atrocity crimes can’t be reported because those who would report atrocity crimes are the ones most likely to be dependent upon web services or WhatsApp or other communications. We’ve been fortunate in Zamzam. I had to buy a generator so they could continue to charge their cell phones. But one of the coordinating counsellors for the project got a European SIM card. So she was able to use that in her phone, and that’s how we’ve been communicating. But I’m now extremely worried about how we will communicate if the communications are as compromised as they seem to be, and the information you’re getting now from me won’t get any better as it goes on.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In a survey conducted by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), covering experiences of refugees and migrants titled ‘Understanding the role of family reunification within mixed movements in Sudan’. MMC documented the significant challenges faced by refugees and migrants, particularly Eritreans and Ethiopians, in formal family reunification processes:

“[...]95% of respondents faced difficulties in formal family reunification processes. These difficulties were commonly related to access to documentation (59%),⁶ access to information (54%), administrative delays (45%) (most often registration) and financial constraints (43%). Eritreans tended to identify difficulties related to access to documentation (42/53 vs. 27/62 among Ethiopians) and access to information (40/53 vs. 23/62 among Ethiopians). These challenges reflect the difficulties that Eritreans face in leaving their country, especially if they are fleeing forced conscription, and in subsequently accessing any documentation through Eritrean embassies abroad, which makes it difficult to access legal migration channels. Eritreans fleeing military service would have had no access to mobile phones during their service to plan their journeys and would not have the support of their embassies abroad or authorities back in Eritrea to obtain documentation.⁷

The wish to reunite with family, while not the main factor driving people to leave their country of origin, certainly defines people’s choice of destination. However, in doing so, people face multiple challenges, including a lack of access to the right documentation and information, as well as administrative and financial issues. As such, legal channels for family reunification are often not available to refugees and migrants leaving their countries of origin, with their families scattered, their whereabouts sometimes unknown and with limited ability to plan their journeys. More than a third of the respondents are therefore not pursuing formal channels and instead move irregularly by their own means to ultimately reunite with family. Family reunification remains an underexplored issue within our broader understanding of mixed, irregular movement, while it is a key component factoring into people’s decision making in terms of how and where to move.”

⁶ Documentation including documents of personal identification, as well as documents providing proof and justification of family ties.

⁷ Jeffrey, J. (March 16, 2017) Face to face with the Eritrean exodus into Ethiopia. The New Humanitarian.

(Source: The Mixed Migration Centre – [Understanding the role of family reunification within mixed movements in Sudan](#), 7 August 2023, pg. 4, last accessed 30 May 2024)

The British Red Cross webpage explained that:

“We are sorry that the British Red Cross cannot work on any family reunion visa or travel assistance applications from Sudan until further notice.

This is because of the closure of the visa application centre in Khartoum and the security issues preventing safe travel out of Sudan.

We will update you via this web page if the situation changes. Please note that the family reunion travel assistance service still works in other countries in the region.”

(Source: British Red Cross – [Family Reunion from Sudan](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is family tracing available for unaccompanied children who have left Sudan and wish to return? Are counselling or mediation services available to assist children in re-establishing contact with their family? By whom?

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared that:

“[...]The few cases that I heard of, it was mostly men going back, but also to check the house. But I also heard about families. I think that it’s not being monitored at the moment. It’s very difficult to do this, so there’s no data on that. And I would say at the moment, it remains anecdotal when it comes to this type of returns. What is sure is that once there are returns, there are literally zero services available.”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In the earlier question, Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that some families were using WhatsApp to try and locate their child. Here, he continues to explain that:

“[...] it’s not going to be either the RSF or the SAF that provides any help in reunification.[...]But in the chaos that now exists, I don’t think we can say that there really are any resources, counselling services, mediation services.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

In an infographic distributed by OCHA in 2023, it was stated that:

“In response to the current crisis, the CP AoR has established a dedicated Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) to allow for the tracking, registration and reunification of unaccompanied children.”

(Source: OCHA – [Sudan: Humanitarian Response Dashboard](#), 15 August 2023, pg. 10)

10.3. Conditions for return

Are children and their families allowed to settle where they would like upon return?

This report published by Amnesty International discusses the dangers for Sudanese nationals who were returned to Sudan:

“Countries should significantly increase their support for the humanitarian response, open their borders and offer safe pathways to ensure protection and support for people fleeing Sudan. States should also refrain from returning Sudanese nationals to Sudan or to any third country where they may be at risk of being returned to Sudan.”

(Source: Amnesty International – [“Death came to our home” War Crimes and Civilian Suffering in Sudan](#), 3 August 2023, pg. 9, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In their 2021 report ‘Sudan-Returnees in Sudan,’ the UNHCR and its partner Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) describe the implementation of community-based support projects:

“UNHCR and its partner Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) implemented three community-based support projects encompassing the construction of two new primary schools (in Kutum and Tina localities), one health centre (in Kutum) as well as the refurbishment of six primary schools and of three health centres which were provided with educational and medical equipment and supplies in Kutum, Tawilla, Kebkabiya and Um-Baru localities. These implemented community-based support projects aimed at supporting peaceful coexistence among communities and a sustainable reintegration of returnees in their land of origin via the provision of access to basic services.”

(Source: UNHCR – [Sudan-Returnees in Sudan](#), 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the UNHCR Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Update from Reliefweb dated 22 January 2019, the article details an event on 7 November, where refugee leaders from Chad’s Kerfie settlement visited their home villages in Central Darfur to evaluate conditions for voluntary repatriation, amidst challenges and ongoing efforts to resolve land disputes and ensure returnees’ rights:

“On 7 November, refugee leaders from Kerfie settlement in Chad participated in a ‘go-and-see’ visit to their home villages in Central Darfur to assess the prevailing conditions in their areas of origin, before deciding to take part in the volrep process. (...) A small number of returnees have faced challenges returning to their original lands. UNHCR is working with the relevant government authorities, including locality commissioners and native administration, to resolve these issues and prevent further land disputes as the volrep programme continues. Based on the Tripartite Agreement, the government has committed to providing refugee returnees with land, security and documentation, including national identity cards and health insurance. UNHCR and COR are continuing to monitor the situation of the returnees and the overall implementation of the Agreement.”

(Source: Reliefweb, UNHCR – [UNHCR Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Update](#), 22 January 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Have children been exposed to abuse, intimidation or violence upon return? Give examples if possible.

An interview with James Elder, a spokesperson for UNICEF, highlights the devastating impact of the conflict in Sudan on children over the last 300 days:

“During the same period, Elder said, there has been a five-fold increase in verified cases of killings, sexual violence and recruitment from a year ago. That, he observed, equates to a terrifying number of children killed, raped or recruited.

“And these numbers are the tip of the iceberg,” he said.

The war between Sudan’s national army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces is ravaging a whole society, he said, with the fighting impeding humanitarian aid from reaching millions of desperate people.

He said two-thirds of the population lack access to health care, warning that Sudan’s shattered health system threatened to kill many more children than the armed conflict itself.”

(Source: UNICEF – [Three hundred days of atrocities against the children of Sudan](#), 9 February 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In the UNICEF: Sudan webpage focused on the protection of children, it is stated that:

“Millions of children are facing multiple risks of grave violations- killing and maiming, child recruitment, violence, rape and more as the war continues. While more children remain on the move, millions are trapped in Khartoum, Darfurs and Kordofans, areas that remain unsafe.”

(Source: UNICEF: Sudan – [Saving lives and protecting children](#), 4 November 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In their 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan, the US Department of State, highlighted that:

“Child Abuse: The government tried to enforce laws criminalizing child abuse and was more likely to prosecute cases involving child abuse and sexual exploitation of children than analogous cases involving adults. Some police stations included “child friendly” family and child protection units and provided legal, medical, and psychosocial support for children.”

(Source: US DOS – 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan, February 2023, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are returnees ever detained for illegal emigration? Give examples if possible.

This 2020 article “M.A. V. Belgium: The (In)Voluntary Return Of A Sudanese Migrant And The Dangers Of Informal Migration Cooperation With Third Countries,” published in the Strasbourg Observers, highlights the problematic nature of organising voluntary returns from places of detention, using the case of M.A. V. Belgium:

“When organised from places of detention, voluntary returns can be highly problematic. As illustrated by the case of M.A., when the prospective returnees are held in detention, they are in a situation of heightened vulnerability and the prospect of release may highly influence their choices in such circumstances. In addition, being told that the deportation is inevitable or that there are no chances of release, being confronted with the country of origin’s authorities, being provided with inconsistent information provided, and fear and mistrust can, in the eyes of the returnee, all contribute to the impression that voluntary return is the only alternative to forced return. Under these circumstances, the consent eventually obtained to the voluntary return can, in no way, be seen to be genuine.”

(Source: Strasbourg observers – [M.A.V. Belgium: The \(In\)Voluntary Return Of A Sudanese Migrant And The Dangers Of Informal Migration Cooperation With Third Countries](#), 3 December 2020, last accessed 23 May 2024)

This public statement published by Amnesty International in January 2018 highlights the repercussions for Sudanese nationals who were returned to Sudan, highlighting reports of ill-treatment by Sudanese officials upon their arrival in Khartoum:

“According to testimonies from some of those returned to Sudan, as collected by the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, reported in December 2017, returnees were ill-treated by Sudanese officials upon arrival in Khartoum.² [...] No bilateral readmission agreement was drafted nor were any arrangements agreed to in written form.⁷ [...] In view of the conflicts and grave human rights abuses in Sudan, and of the specific risk of persecution of those originating from conflict-affected states – such as Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile – Amnesty International considers that Sudanese individuals from those areas should not be returned to Sudan, where they would be at real risk of serious human rights violations.²¹ People coming from other areas of Sudan must not be sent back to Sudan either, if they are at risk of serious human rights violations, for instance by being accused of being members of the opposition. In any case, the individual circumstances of any person subject to repatriation, and the specific risk each may be exposed to upon return, must be thoroughly assessed before issuing an expulsion order.”

² <https://www.hln.be/de-krant/teruggestuurde-soedanezen-opgepakt-en-gefolterd-bij-aankomst~a41bb49b>

⁷ Belgian House of Representatives, Interior Affairs Committee, Compte rendu- Commissions- Législature 54, 4 October 2017, available at: <https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/54/ic742x.html>

²¹ The specific need for international protection of people coming from these conflict-affected regions is acknowledged by Belgian authorities, which in general recognize either refugee status or subsidiary protection to virtually all Sudanese asylumseekers coming from these areas. See letter from CGRS to Theo Francken, Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, 24 October 2017, on file. See also <https://www.hln.be/nieuws/binnenland/-de-verdediging-van-theo-francken-isverbijsterend~a6e6dec3/>

(Source: Amnesty International – [Belgium: Returns to Sudan violated principles of non-refoulement](#), 30 January 2018, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are returned children and their families discriminated against? By whom and how?

An article published by the OHCHR describes the escalation of racial tensions in Sudan:

“Alarmed by the increase of ethnic violence in Sudan since the outbreak of hostilities on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) today urged Sudan to address and prevent further escalation of ethnic violence, incitement to racial hatred and racist hate speech.

“In a decision published today under its Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures, the Committee called on the SAF, the RSF, and their allied forces to immediately cease hostilities and stop further violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law, notably violent acts targeting people on the basis of their ethnic origin.”

“The Committee was shocked by reports of ethnically motivated attacks committed principally by the RSF and allied militia targeting members of the Masalit, Fur and Zaghawa communities, in particular killing of people fleeing the conflict zones, attacks on camps and sites for internally displaced people, forced displacement, looting, burning and destruction of villages and towns. These include attacks which took place in El Geneina, West Darfur, that were primarily against the Masalit community and resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, including Masalit leaders, lawyers and human rights defenders. There were also reports of rape of women and girls, some as young as 14 years old, and of racial slurs towards Masalit and other women and girls of African ethnicity.”

“The Committee was also alarmed at reports of arbitrary detentions, torture and extrajudicial killings allegedly perpetrated by the SAF and allied militia, targeting mainly members of Arab tribes from Darfur and Kordofan based on their perceived ethnic or tribal origin.”

(Source: OHCHR – [Sudan: UN Committee urges end to ethnic violence and hate speech, calls for immediate ceasefire](#), 16 April 2024, last accessed 23 May 2024)

This COI report published by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, describes the situation of Darfuris and Nuba outside their own region of origin in Sudan:

“[...]Notions of Arab supremacy and the condescending attitude towards communities from marginalised regions, embedded among the traditional Sudanese elite and deeply rooted in Sudanese society, continue to exist and, according to many sources, this situation is unlikely to change in the near future. The extent and nature of the discrimination a person may face depends on a combination of connected and mutually reinforcing factors such as ethnicity, origin, network, economic status, politics or religious profile. Under al-Bashir’s regime, both Arab and non-Arab opponents of the Sudanese regime, e.g. human rights activists, critical journalists, politically active students, lawyers, tribal leaders and actual and perceived sympathisers of rebel movements risked repression by the authorities and the now[1]disbanded NISS in particular. [...] Darfuris and Nuba elsewhere in Sudan may be subjected to racial profiling. Individuals are sometimes the targets, experiencing arbitrary detention and being addressed in coarse language, but sometimes an entire community can suffer this, as illustrated by the outbreaks of violence in Kassala in May 2020 and Port Sudan in August 2020. The sources consulted contain no or only scant information about the treatment of returning Sudanese by the authorities on their return to Sudan since the transitional government came to power in August 2019. Since then, hardly any problems involving returnees have been identified, although there are some reports about interrogations, detention and possible extortion of people upon their return to Sudan.”

(Source: Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons – [The Situation of Darfuris and Nuba outside of their regions of origin](#), 28 June 2021, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Does the state or non-state actors provide for special reintegration programmes for children and their families upon return after a long stay outside Sudan? What do these programmes provide and for how long? Are these programmes accessible in practice?

The platform from the independent human rights organisation VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, published the following information for refugees:

“If you are thinking about leaving the Netherlands, several organisations can help you return to your country of origin. Help from these organisations is free.

You will receive a basic allowance according to the REAN scheme. REAN stands for ‘Return and Emigration Assistance from the Netherlands’. The REAN scheme reimburses:

Support

An airline ticket

Assistance in obtaining travel documents

€ 200 in cash for an adult and €40 for a child travelling with you. You will receive this cash at Schiphol on the day of departure.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) arranges this allowance for you. The organisation helping you return can apply to IOM for the allowance on your behalf.”

(Source: Refugee Help by VluchtelingenWerk – [Return Sudan](#), no date available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

IOM published the following information on its Sudan page:

“Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) is one of many migration management services IOM offers to migrants and governments. It aims at orderly, humane and cost-effective return and reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin.

The main beneficiaries of IOM’s return and reintegration assistance are stranded migrants in host or transit countries, irregular migrants, regular migrants, unsuccessful asylum seekers, and migrants in vulnerable situations, such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, or migrants with health-related needs. IOM also provides pre-departure assistance and counseling, medical counseling, transportation, post-arrival assistance, as well as reception and reintegration support to migrants.

IOM’s AVRR programs support Sudanese nationals returning to Sudan under AVRR. Reintegration assistance provided under AVRR can include counseling or medical assistance upon return, a reintegration grant to set up a small business, vocational training or job placement and education as well as follow-up monitoring. IOM also assists migrants in Sudan who are unwilling or unable to remain in Sudan to return to their countries of origin.”

(Source: IOM – [Assisted voluntary return and reintegration; Sudan](#), no date available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UN in a new article reported that:

“In 2021, more than 3,800 returnees in Sudan have received reintegration assistance under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative. Worldwide, IOM supported close to 1.9 million aid recipients with cash-based interventions across 119 countries. IOM Sudan provides reintegration assistance for voluntary humanitarian return recipients and stranded migrants, which include the provision of economic reintegration assistance in the form of mobile money. This is complemented by business training to equip returnees with skills to set up and manage their own business as they restart their lives.”

(Source: UN – [UN reintegration support in Sudan](#), 5 September 2022, last accessed 23 May 2024)

UNHCR, Nederland published the following information on the organisation can help with repatriation:

“How does UNHCR help with repatriation?

UNHCR plays a leading role and works with governments and other partners to promote, facilitate and coordinate voluntary returns in safety and dignity. We do this through:

Assistance in maintaining and expanding skills and resources during displacement that will support refugees upon return;

Ensuring a voluntary and informed choice, including by collecting and sharing up-to-date information about the country and region of origin with refugees, organizing “viewing visits” and providing advice;

Support with transport to the area of origin;

Monitoring the situation of returnees upon their return; facilitating the participation of returnees in peace and reconciliation activities;

Supporting interventions to promote livelihoods in return areas;

Promote the inclusion of returnees in government plans in the countries of return.” (In-house translation. The translator is a native Dutch speaker)

ORIGINAL source

“Hoe helpt UNHCR bij repatriëring?

UNHCR speelt een leidende rol en werkt samen met overheden en andere partners om vrijwillige terugkeer in veiligheid en waardigheid te bevorderen, te vergemakkelijken en te coördineren. Dit doen we door middel van:

Hulp bij het behouden en uitbreiden van vaardigheden en middelen tijdens ontheemding die vluchtelingen bij terugkeer zullen ondersteunen;

Zorgen voor een vrijwillige en geïnformeerde keuze, onder meer door het verzamelen en delen van actuele informatie over het land en de regio van herkomst met vluchtelingen, het organiseren van “kijkbezoeken” en het geven van advies;

Ondersteuning bij vervoer naar gebied van herkomst;

Monitoren van de situatie van terugkeerders bij hun terugkeer; het faciliteren van deelname van terugkeerders aan vredes- en verzoeningsactiviteiten;

Het ondersteunen van interventies zoals toegang tot juridische hulp en teruggave van huis, land en eigendommen in terugkeergebieden;

Meewerken aan interventies om levensonderhoud te bevorderen in terugkeergebieden;

Bevordering van de opname van terugkeerders in overheidsplannen in de landen van terugkeer.”

(Source: UNHCR Nederland – [Repatrianten; translated by researcher fluent in Dutch](#), no date available, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Is there any monitoring mechanism in relation to return?

Mathilde Vu, an Advocacy Officer working for the Norwegian Refugee Council, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 shared that:

“The few cases that I heard of, it was mostly men going back, but also to check the house. But I also heard about families. I think that it’s not being monitored at the moment. It’s very difficult to do this, so there’s no data on that. And I would say at the moment, it remains anecdotal when it comes to this type of returns.[...]”

(Source: Mathilde Vu, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

Are there reports on returned children who have no access to school or drop-out of school because of problems with language, absence of appropriate documentation, etc?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert, whom we interviewed for this report in February 2024 explained that:

“When it comes to education, there is no such report. [...]But generally, in terms of my experience, Sudan has an issue of it’s one of the countries that will not allow you to use another curriculum except [the] Sudanese curriculum. And this has become a dilemma for refugees who are coming from other parts of the country, from other countries, neighbouring countries to Sudan, particularly Ethiopia and South Sudan. For example, because education is my area so when I was with the children in managing that education project in Tigray response in eastern parts of the country, we faced a problem of language and curriculum. So the government did not allow us to use [a] curriculum other than the Sudanese curriculum. And when it comes to the language, [...]Arabic is the main language. English is allowed on an exceptional basis for such a situation. However, no other language can be [used]. And children who came from Tigray, they studied Amharic. They studied Amharic and this was one of the dilemmas. The same with South Sudanese. Also, we face a problem in terms of curriculum. We mainly use this as [a] curriculum in English. So this is my experience when it comes to and this is why many children drop out because [of] the language.”

Ahmed continued to share that:

“[...] Except maybe in [the] main town because usually, if it is being taught in camps, they have one understanding for the situation of the children, and they may support. However, in towns like main cities like, for example, El-Obeid and Khartoum, they might not experience such situations. So usually, the organisation works on those issues, those particular on [an] individual basis. And not because the system is not allowed in or [doesn’t] have [...] documentation to study, but rather it’s the awareness of the teachers and the awareness of schools. So those in the camp are well aware, but those in the cities are not well familiar with the situation of the children and allowing them to study. And we work on that one on [an] individual basis. And usually, on [an] individual basis and the support of other organisations, we always support the facilitation of the communication. But also, it’s good to highlight that when the child will need for [...] the documents to study, mainly during the first year, like grade one. With mobilisation or support, they can access the school. And during the last year, when they are [in their] last year of grades, last grade, when they are moving from [one] level to another level, like from basic school to intermediate school, they might face some challenges here. Yeah. This one, mainly, they require the documentation to be available for the child because they will stop going to high school.”

(Source: Ahmed Mustafa Elnour, [interview record](#), 21 February 2024)

Eric Reeves who we interviewed for this report in February 2024 provided the following context:

“Let me go through that step-by-step. Most of the children who return were going to school previously, at least if we go back to 2003. Somehow, the educational system didn’t fall apart completely. [...] Dropouts, well, that’s been the definition of education in Darfur, how long do you go before you drop out? Hemedti only got to third grade. One of the big problems in Chad for Darfuri refugees is that the Déby government is trying to impose a Chadian curriculum on Darfuri children. Well, the Darfuri curriculum is based on Arabic, and in Chad, it’s based on French. So it’s been extremely difficult for this transition to be effected, and they may actually have given up on it. And with such a huge new influx of refugees, I think all the priority is given to food, medicine, and water. Children returning, I don’t believe, is a big number. Why would you come back to Sudan unless to be reunited with your family? How would you contact your family? How would you have gotten out in the first place? You ask all those questions. It’s difficult to believe that there are many returnees. And the access to school has always been problematic for people in the marginalised regions. Many places have no schools. Many places have only ramshackle school buildings, untrained teachers. Education, and that’s why Darfuris go to Khartoum. Education has always been focused on Khartoum. There are schools, and some good ones, and universities in El Fasher and Nyala. But these are the exceptions, and they’re obviously distinctly urban. Well, they’re very big cities, the two largest cities in Darfur.”

(Source: Eric Reeves, [interview record](#), 7 February 2024)

The UK Home Office stated:

“The fighting has severely impacted education. Schools and educational institutions remain closed in the conflict-affected areas including Khartoum, Al Jazirah, South Darfur, West Darfur and West Kordofan. According to OCHA, as of November 2023 the conflict had deprived about 12 million children of schooling since April, with the total number of children in Sudan who are out of school reaching 19 million. Of this total, 6.5 million children have lost access to school due to increased violence and insecurity, with at least 10,400 schools now closed in conflict – affected areas. Schools are also used to shelter IDPs (see [Education](#)). US\$131.0 million was required to assist 4.3 million out of the 8.6 in need of educational assistance. At the end of November only US\$ 27.0 million (or 20.6%) of the required funding had been received. Only 87,433 [or 2%] of the 4.3 million targeted children had been reached with assistance.”

(Source: UK Home Office – [Country policy and information note: humanitarian situation, Sudan](#), February 2024, updated 5 March 2024, pg. 8, para 3.1.10, last accessed on 26 April 2024)

Do returned children have access to health care, including mental health care and rehabilitation, or is there any form of discrimination upon return?

The 2020 US DOS Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan reported that:

“Birth Registration: The constitutional declaration states that persons born to a citizen mother or father have the right to citizenship. Birth registration was provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. Most newborns received birth certificates, but some in remote areas did not. Registered midwives, dispensaries, clinics, and hospitals could issue certificates. Failure to present a valid birth certificate precludes enrollment in school. Access to health care was similarly dependent on possession of a valid birth certificate, but many doctors accepted a patient’s verbal assurance that he or she had one.”

(Source: US DOS – [2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), February 2023, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

In this UNHCR situation reported that:

“[...] Based on the Tripartite Agreement, the government has committed to providing refugee returnees with land, security and documentation, including national identity cards and health insurance. UNHCR and COR are continuing to monitor the situation of the returnees and the overall implementation of the Agreement.”

(Source: Reliefweb, UNHCR – [UNHCR Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Update, 22 January 2019](#), last accessed 23 May 2024)

The Sudan Children’s Act of 2010 states:

“47 (1) The Ministry shall take appropriate measures to achieve the physical and psychological rehabilitation, and social reaccommodation of the Child, who is the victim of any of the forms of neglect, exploitation, abuse, torture, or any of the forms of harsh treatment, or severe, inhuman, or degrading punishment, or armed conflicts. (2) Such rehabilitation and re-accommodation shall be conducted in such environment, as may strengthen the Child health, and self and dignity respect.”

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2010, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Do returned children have access to health care, including mental health care and rehabilitation, or is there any form of discrimination upon return?

In this blog post titled [Mental Health in Sudan](#), the Borgen Project reported that:

“In Sudan, most mental health service providers are centralized in the capital of Khartoum. A barrier to mental health care access is the location of psychiatric hospitals — out of 18 states of the country only 12 states have “fully-equipped psychiatric hospitals” managed by qualified psychiatric personnel. [...] Very few psychiatrists operate in Sudan’s rural areas. In total, as of 2020, 878 professionals across public, private and NGO sectors manage mental health in Sudan.”

(Source: The Borgen Project – [Mental Health in Sudan](#), 25 April 2023, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The UK Home Office’s CPIN on the security situation in Sudan in 2023, states that:

“Across Sudan, more than two-thirds of hospitals are not functional due to direct attacks, occupation by fighting parties [...] An increasing number of children and parents need mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).”

(Source: UK Home Office – [Country Policy and Information Note. Sudan: Security situation](#), June 2023, pg. 34, last accessed 23 May 2024)

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(Source: Reliefweb, UNHCR – [UNHCR Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Update](#), 22 January 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)

The US DOS 2020 country report on Human Rights Practices below, describes Sudan’s policy on birth registration:

“[...] Failure to present a valid birth certificate precludes enrollment in school. Access to health care was similarly dependent on possession of a valid birth certificate, but many doctors accepted a patient’s verbal assurance that he or she had one.”

(Source: US DOS – [2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), February 2023, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

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(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children’s Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2010, pg. 26, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that children returning have all necessary documentation (identity, citizenship, education and medical records)? (In chronological order)

The Children's Act, 2010, outlines specific legal provisions related to the rights and protections of children:

"5.2. (e) the State shall guarantee all the lawful rights of the Child, in particular his right to prove his affinity and his right to life and growth, the name, nationality, breast-feeding, custody, clothing and accommodation, and his right to education and care of his conditions, in accordance with the provisions of the law;

[...] (g) a Child born outside the framework of marriage shall have the right to registration in the Birth Registers, affiliated to whoever of his parents admits his affiliation or any other name in case of their denial;

[...] (i) a born Child shall have the right to extract a birth certificate thereto, in the form prepared therefore, and deliver the same to his folks, without fees;"

[...] Every Child shall have a health card, the data of which shall be registered in a special register, at the competent health office, and shall be delivered to the parent, or guardian of the Child, within one month, of the date of birth, as the laws and regulations of public health may specify."

(Source: Refworld – [Sudan: Children's Act, 2010](#), 10 February 2010, pp. 7-11, last accessed 23 May 2024)

Answering the question 'Can a child obtain retroactive or replacement birth registration documents? (3A), the Consortium for Street Children published that:

"A local network has been introduced throughout hospitals on a federal level, whereby each hospital can submit an updated list every day for the Civil Record Authorities to issue a birth certificate immediately, which is the principal document required for the national identification system. Despite the combined efforts of international NGOs and the Sudanese Government to improve the system of registration, Sudan's birth registration system remains weak- it is manual and labour intensive, and parents are often unaware of the necessary processes for registering children or discouraged by the application fees. [...] retroactive registration: Under the Civil Registry Act of 2011,³ a notice of birth must be given to the Registrar responsible for birth registrations by the health facility that oversaw the birth within 15 days of the birth occurring (section 20.1). The Registrar must then register the birth. However, if the registration did not take place in this time frame, there are additional requirements. Firstly, under section 20.5, if the birth took place within the last year, the registration can be made following an investigation by the Registrar. Secondly, under the same provision, a registration shall not be made if the time since birth exceeds one year except with the approval of the Director General of the Civil Registry Department.

In practice, children up to 15 years can be registered at local Civil Registry Offices. Unregistered children older than fifteen years will be referred to the Medical Commission Functioning by the Civil Registry Office to undergo an age estimate and birth registration.⁴ Parents of unregistered children are required to provide proof of identity and to obtain a certificate from a court to certify that they are the child's parents.⁵ It is unclear whether and how children who are no longer in contact with their parents can access this process."

³ Available at: <http://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Sudan-Civil-Registration-Act-2011-EN.pdf>

⁴ See Ehab Ahmed Mohamed Frah, Reasons for Low Birth Registration in Sudan, 7 Journal of African Studies and Development 64, 65 (2013).

⁵ PLAN, Birth registration in emergencies: a review of best practices in humanitarian action (2014) p.44, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/BirthRegistrationMarginalized/PlanInternationalGeneva_5.pdf

(Source: Consortium for Street Children – [legal identity Sudan](#), last updated August 2019, last accessed 23 May 2024)



Appendices

A. Methodology

Step 1: Scoping for research topics

The scoping phase will identify what the most pressing COI gaps are for UK asylum applicants and therefore which topics of Thematic COI reports have the potential to benefit both a large number of applicants and those most vulnerable to poor decision making.

To identify the most pressing topics for our research reports, Asylos will:

- regularly consult their networks of legal representatives and refugee community organisations that support asylum seekers in the RSD procedure (asking partners to specify why exactly the topic is so important, asking them to point to Home Office country specific asylum policy known as Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs) and Reasons for Refusal Letters (RFRs) where appropriate)
- Contact the Refugee and Asylum Forum / IAGCI / Chief Inspector for Borders and Immigration for input on relevant topics.
- launch an open call for topic suggestions and disseminate it to its respective lists of subscribers.

In addition, Asylos will:

- monitor such forums as the Refugee Legal Group and the Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium on an ongoing basis
- monitor the requests it receives for research assistance on individual cases
- record the statistics for common themes in the reports it produces for individual cases
- invite suggestions from partners who have requested our services as part of the ongoing feedback collection.

Asylos will assess which topics to select on the basis of greatest potential impact, with reference to analysis of:

- the number of asylum seekers generated by nationality (UK asylum statistics are not published on convention ground/profile)
- Appeal success rates by nationality
- any existing upcoming Country Guidance (CG) cases that the Tribunal is to hear [to avoid duplication]
- A need for an evidence base to challenge existing CPINs [e.g. where it relies on outdated or uncorroborated COI].

Throughout the scoping exercise, we will approach actors that represent groups, particularly vulnerable, to information gaps and thus poor quality decision-making, such as women, children and young people.

In addition, Asylos will set up a Steering Committee who will assist in the selection and prioritisation of strategic research report topics, as well as manage any risks arising from the project. Members of the committee will be approached at least once during the early project phase in order to review and comment on the planned methods and execution. The Steering Committee consists of the following members: Kama Petruczenko (Senior Policy Analyst - Children and Young People at Refugee Council), Sian Pearce (Solicitor and PhD student at the University of Exeter), Cynthia Orchard (Consultant Policy and Advocacy Advisor), Mutaz Aljaaly (Lawyer), and Raga Gibreel (Director of Green Kordofan).

Step 2: Identifying preliminary Terms of Reference (ToR)

Once a research topic has been chosen, the following steps will be taken in order to identify the preliminary research headings (i.e. draft ToR):

- Read relevant Country Guidance (CG) cases from tribunal (identifying which evidence is outdated)
- Read relevant Home Office Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs)
- Reference other COI guidance/policy publications from international organisations such as EUAA, UNHCR as well as (Sources from media, human rights organisations and academic research)
- Include input from other stakeholders (project partners).

Asylos will draw up the draft ToR, providing input from our topic scoping activities.

Step 3: Training session for Asylos volunteers

Asylos will source from its volunteer network a group of approximately 5 volunteer researchers for each report to conduct the COI desk research and to assist with interviewing stakeholders.

Volunteer researchers will be fully briefed on the project purpose, design and research methodology. They will then be required to attend a zoom training session which will cover the following:

- Advanced COI research techniques
- The nature and scope of the research gap that the report aims to address
- Any Home Office guidance and policy related to the topic
- How experts are instructed in the UK, including how to ensure experts are aware of guidelines for expert testimony in a UK court

Step 4: COI Desk Research

For each report, we will undertake a review of the publicly available COI. This desk research will be coordinated by Asylos's Programme Manager, working with a team of volunteers.

Before the research begins, Asylos will devise and commit to consulting an agreed list of sources from an agreed period of time. This list will be divided among the volunteers to consult and to submit any relevant findings which will be included in the final report. When any additional sources are identified in the desk research volunteers will record them alongside the initial list, and submit any relevant information. The additional list will then be redistributed among the volunteers to consult.

Once this list has been exhausted, each volunteer will also be designated several of the ToR and asked to do some final research on those topics to ensure that any further (sources are identified and included).

Research will be conducted in line with Asylos's internal COI research [training](#) and [handbook](#) and adhering to accepted COI research standards, including elements of the [EASO country of origin information report methodology \(EASO, 2012\)](#), the [ACCORD COI training manual \(ACCORD, 2013\)](#) and the [Common EU Guidelines for Processing COI \(European Union, 2008\)](#). Researchers should consult these documents throughout the research process and training sessions with volunteers will reflect these standards.

To support the collection of research data, researchers will submit their sources using Google Docs. The google form template will be provided to them by the UK Programme Manager. When using Google Docs, researchers should:

- Include links to full sources/citations. Where the source is not publically available they will need to obtain permission for Asylos to share on request. Particular attention needs to be paid to copyrights issued as the report will be publicly available (e.g. written permission is needed from the author before including a map or photo in the report). Researchers can refer to the Licence or Terms and Conditions of the repository in which the article is stored to find out what the restrictions are. If in doubt, they should consult the holder of the copyright. Where it is not possible to get consent, the link to the journal with the paywall will have to suffice;
- If citing from Home Office FFMs then use the information in the transcripts rather than what has been summarised by the Home Office in the body of the report;
- Include original wording when translating and specify the translator and their qualification;
- Keep source summaries very concise and ensure neutrality by not offering an ‘assessment’ of the source or drawing any conclusions ourselves such as propositions about ‘risk on return’;
- Raise any concerns about the source (e.g. reliability, currency, contradictory content etc) within the source summaries;
- Ensure that sources which are submitted are as recent as possible and within the reporting period;
- Ensure page numbers, paragraph numbers or section headings are included for each excerpt. Insert them in brackets in the ‘citation from source’ box after each excerpt. For example:

“There is little understanding or support for men and boys who have experienced trafficking. The focus of support for women and children was apparent from discussions and there is a gap in understanding about the causes of trafficking of males or their support needs. (Pg 8)

[...] Research undertaken within Albania often provides the best picture of the characteristics of individuals who have been trafficked. (Pg 19)”

Please note! These thematic research reports aim to identify and fill gaps in COI on certain topics. This will mean that it may be difficult to find sources that address certain parts of the research brief. This is to be expected! When this happens, researchers should submit any findings which relate to the topic more generally and we will ask the experts to comment on how this evidence relates to the specific research question at the next stage in the project. For the same reason, researchers are asked to report back to Asylos’ Programme Manager where they have encountered information gaps.

Step 5: Finalising ToR and drafting interview questions

Once the researchers have submitted all of their sources, Asylos’s Programme Manager will create a master draft report using Google Docs. Whilst editing the report, the manager will finalise the ToR and arrange the findings according to the headings that were identified. Whilst doing so, the programme manager should assess which topics do not seem to be adequately covered in existing COI and consider where expert evidence would be particularly helpful in order to fill these gaps, for example where there is a total absence of COI, a lack of corroborative COI or where there is contradictory COI.

Once the gaps have been identified, Asylos’ Programme Manager will draft a list of interview questions for stakeholders alongside the ToR for review. The interview questions will address the gaps identified and will be carefully phrased to generate the most accurate and useful answers. These will be approved by the project review committee.

Step 6: Identifying interviewees / stakeholders

The aim is to identify stakeholders that have extensive professional experience or recently published credible research on the topic and those that have recently been in the country of research.

The [EU Common Guidelines on \(Joint\) Fact Finding missions](#) suggest that:

- Possible sources may include academics, research institutes and think tanks, NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, experienced news reporters and journalists, community leaders or other representatives, religious authorities, or political parties, government representatives.⁵⁹
- It is important that a variety of sources are identified and interviewed so that information can be cross checked.⁶⁰
- The guidelines state “try to avoid sources with too similar agendas, standpoints, backgrounds and interests, which can be a challenge – especially when using the ‘Snowballing’. It is generally useful to consult at least three different sources that are independent of each other on each main topic of the ToR”.⁶¹
- It also suggests that interviewing mid-level staff, rather than those in more senior roles, may be more helpful as they are likely to have more experience working on the ground / in the field.⁶²

Asylos will source relevant stakeholders by reference to those cited in UK case law, those having published academic material on the issue in question (e.g. JSTOR search), those recommended on the Refugee Legal Group, Electronic Immigration Network (EIN), AMERA International, and the Refugee Rights in Exile Programme.

Relevant organisations will be sourced and relevant representatives from these identified by reference to human rights material or media sources, for example published on COI databases such as the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation’s (ACCORD) ecoi.net, UNHCR’s Refworld or Reliefweb.

Asylos will also seek recommendations from our respective boards of trustees and networks of legal representatives. Other project partners with relevant specialist knowledge may also be consulted.

All individuals and organisations contacted will be asked to recommend other potential stakeholders for interview.

We will include in the final report, as part of the “sources and databases consulted” section, a list of all the places in which we looked for stakeholders. Researchers will be required to make a note of any website, organisations and other sources consulted when carrying out the desk based research to help identify stakeholders.

Any potential experts should be recorded in a document (including such information as who recommended them, credentials, contact details, any notes on their validity as a potential source). The Asylos Programme Manager will discuss the list of potential experts with Asylos team members at the end of the exercise.

In order to assess the validity of individuals and organisations as a potential source, the following questions will be considered:

- Who is the source and do they have specific knowledge / experience which makes them have expertise on the topic?
- What context do they work in and to what extent might this context influence them or create any bias?
- How does the source formulate any information they present? Is it presented in an objective, neutral and transparent way?

⁵⁹ P. 10 “Identifying potential sources”

⁶⁰ P. 11 “Deciding between potential sources”

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² *ibid*.

It is anticipated that all stakeholders with the relevant knowledge/experience in question may be contacted for an interview unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. It is our aim to conduct at least 5 interviews per report, from a range of different disciplines. Given that not all stakeholders will respond, a target number of 15 will be initially contacted by email requesting an interview. We will aim at ensuring that represented in this initial list of contacts is a balance between those who are academics, professionals on the ground and government representatives.

Step 7: Instructing interviewees

Once a list of experts to contact has been agreed, the Asylos UK Programme Manager will send an initial email introducing the project and asking if they would consider contributing their expertise. They may ask project partners for support in making first contact with potential interviewees where their connections may increase the chance of a positive response. Where the manager does not receive a response from potential interviewees, they will follow up with them by email and/or phone. It is our aim to conduct a total of at least five interviews per report, from a range of different disciplines. Given that not all experts will be able to respond or be interviewed, at least 15 experts will initially be contacted by email requesting an interview.

If a stakeholder provisionally agrees to take part, the manager sends a follow-up email attaching the following documents:

- an edited version of the '[Asylos information sheet for interviewees](#)' [which explains how responses will be used and how the preferred level of anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed]
- a copy of the ToR and the interview questions.

The manager will also ensure that they are aware that the following can be made available to them on request:

- The COI desk research report
- The Thematic COI Report Methodology.

Once a stakeholder has had sight of this further information and confirms their willingness to take part, arrangements will be made for how they will submit their answers. The information sheet asks the stakeholder to indicate if they would prefer to submit their contribution in written form or through an oral interview. If possible, the manager will encourage each participant to agree to an interview (unless interviewees are very experienced in providing written expert testimony for RSD procedures) as we have found that interviews are more likely to yield usable information. Once these arrangements have been made, each participant is asked to provide a short bio, or link to their CV, which will be published alongside the final report.

Step 8: Interviewing stakeholders

Interviews will primarily be conducted by Asylos's Programme Manager with assistance from Asylos volunteers where appropriate. Each interview should be recorded, unless interviewees have indicated that they do not wish for this to happen. In this case interviewers should take notes while conducting the interview. Those conducting the interviews are asked to stick to the following guidelines:

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer should start by introducing themselves, thanking the interviewee for taking part, and asking for permission to record the interview. Once this has been agreed they should check that the interviewees have received, and have reference to, the report containing our findings from the desk research and have read and understood 'Asylos information sheet for interviewees' (contained in appendix 2) which sets out our recommendations for supplying their evidence. All interviewees have received these guidelines but should be reminded of following key points during the introduction:

- Interviewees should not attempt to answer any questions which fall outside of their expertise or about which they have insufficient information.
- Interviewees should make clear if the information they are providing is based on direct experience or other evidence throughout the interview.
- If interviewees have obtained the information from other (Sources they should make sure they confirm where they obtained that information).
- Interviewees should not withhold any information on the basis it may detract from their view, rather if interviewees are aware of information conflicting with their views, they should be asked to acknowledge it and explain why their opinion departs from this information.

Before launching into the questions, the interviewer should double check how the source wants to be referenced in the final report and whether or not they would prefer to be anonymous. The interviewee will have already indicated this in their confidentiality and anonymity agreement, so this serves to ensure that interviewees are still in agreement with what they initially indicated.

Once the introduction is over the interviewer may commence asking questions, working through the questions in a structured and methodical way. Whilst doing so, volunteers are asked to pay attention to the following points on interview techniques:

- Ensure that your manner remains impartial at all times. Do not use ‘leading questions’.
- Be mindful that certain topics might be sensitive to ask.
- Do not be afraid to interrupt! This may mean asking for clarification or politely suggesting to move on to the next question if the interviewee goes off topic or it becomes apparent they do not have the appropriate expertise or sufficient information to speak authoritatively on the topic.
- If it is unclear what information the interviewee is basing their statements on, seek clarification.

The EU common guidelines states:

“Additionally, it may also be useful to ask a respondent to clarify or give more factual background to support a statement. This will often be the case where a declaratory statement or Policy position has been given on a particular topic. Requesting additional factual information to back up a statement or position will help give a clearer perspective or a rationale to what has been said, and may also remind the respondent why they have a particular viewpoint. In some instances it may challenge their own assumptions or bring out any potential bias or advocacy on the part of the respondent in a neutral, non-confrontational way.” (Pg 20-21)

In the interest of source validation, ask the interviewees to identify where any information they rely on can be found by our researchers after the interview.

Step 9: Citing the interviews and writing up the full report

After each interview, the interviewer will transcribe the recording in full and verbatim, with only very minor adaptations being made to enhance comprehensibility. Interview transcripts will be saved under a unique reference number, rather than using interviewees’ names if requested. The document which links interviewees’ names to each unique reference number will be password protected and only accessible to project staff. This transcript will then be returned to the interlocutor, giving them 14 days to sign it off. This transcript should then be sent to the Programme Manager which will be appended in full in the report. If the interviewee wishes certain excerpts to be made anonymous, they will be cited as such in the body of the report and not included in the appended full transcripts.

The report drafters will select relevant excerpts from the interviews and present these under the corresponding research headings in the report alongside the findings from the desk review. The manager should use this opportunity to add any additional COI that was mentioned in interviews and then make any further edits to the report, ensuring that the following points have been addressed:

- General formatting should be in line with Asylos’s ‘research handbook’.
- Each source should be introduced separately with a concise summary identifying any patterns in convergence or disagreement in the sources consulted, rather than summarising the content of the sources.
- Ensure the list of sources consulted is complete, with access links and information about when the sources were accessed (this is crucial for the user of the report to trace back the original source).
- To further aid transparency it is crucial to provide page numbers, paragraph numbers and section headings (where appropriate) for each excerpt to facilitate access to the original source.
- When using Fact-Finding Mission reports it is important to extract excerpts from the transcripts provided (if applicable) and to assign the excerpt to the interlocutor interviewed rather than including the summary provided by the authors of the fact-finding mission report.
- The final report should include a note on who instructed the interviewees and when (month and year), and a list of the documents the interviewees were provided with.
- A full transcript of each interview should be included as an appendix at the end of the report, excluding any excerpts that the interviewee wished to keep anonymous.
- Fully anonymous interviews are included as an appendix without any further identifying information.

Following final edits, the report will be sent to Asylos Director for review. Asylos will use this opportunity to revise and update the findings from the desk based research. Once Asylos Director has made her edits, the full report will be sent to each stakeholder detailing how they have been cited, with a copy of their interview transcript / written submissions, to sign off. Stakeholders should be given a 14 day deadline for this, after which we will assume that they are satisfied.

Once the report is published, interviewees can no longer withdraw but we will be able to make additions by issuing addendums, should they wish to provide more up to date (Sources or information which was not previously available to them).

Step 10: Dissemination

Once the report has been signed off, the Programme Manager will be responsible for publishing it on Asylos’ website, ecoi.net, Refworld and the Electronic Immigration Network (EIN). Efforts should also be made to promote the report through sharing the report via the RLG mailing list and other platforms such as the RMCC (Refugee and Migrant Children’s Consortium). The manager will also consider promoting it through websites such as Free Movement and EIN.

Step 11: Evaluation of impact

This information will be made publicly available to all, so that it can be reviewed and used by asylum seekers, Home Office case workers, legal representatives and appeal court immigration judges alike. The reports will be accessible internationally, meaning they will also be used by and influence institutions like the UNHCR and European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), as well as decision makers in other countries’ asylum determination systems.

Asylos will track progress and impact throughout the project cycle by:

- Recording the number of downloads from its website and asking ACCORD for data from ecoi.net
- Collecting feedback from Asylos' networks of legal representatives to review how well the report met the information needed we identified, as well as how the report has been used.
- Consulting members of the COI Experts Group which it moderates to review how well the report met the information need we identified, as well as how the report has been used
- Tracking how the reports have been used by decision makers (e.g. in Home Office policy documents, UK case law, EUAA reports).

Learning will be fed back into the project on an ongoing basis and an evaluation of its overall impact will be shared with interested stakeholders on its completion.

Further reading

- [Tribunal's Practice Directions on instructing experts from the outset](#) (Section 10)
- [Best Practice Guide on expert country evidence in asylum procedures](#)
- [EU Common Guidelines on Joint Fact Finding Missions](#)
- [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#)
- [European Asylum Support Office's research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#) (note that a revised methodology is due to be published soon)
- [ACCORD COI Training Manual](#) (note that a new edition of this Training Manual was published 2024, see Austrian Red Cross/ACCORD: [Researching Country of Origin Information - Training Manual](#), 2024 edition)
- [UNICEF – Methodology Guidance on Child Notice](#)

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C. Interviewee Biographies and Transcripts

Disclaimer: Please note that some of the interviewees provided their own biography details. These have not been authored by Asylos and, as a result, they do not follow a standard format.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour

Ahmed is a Humanitarian aid Practitioner/Expert based in Sudan with extensive experience managing educational and humanitarian programs in conflict-affected areas of Sudan. Currently, he is currently with Save the Children in Sudan. Previously, Ahmed held significant roles at Save the Children International, including Head of Program Implementation and Senior Education Manager, overseeing diverse initiatives aimed at bolstering community resilience. With earlier positions at UNICEF and SOS Children's Villages International, he has expertise in strategic program implementation, donor relations, and child development and has graduated from Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Asma Taha

Asma Taha, a Project Manager for Children on the Move project with one of the leading International organisations in Sudan. Asma brings 6 years of experience working with both International and local NGOs in Sudan mainly in the Child Protection thematic area including the area of populations on the move. Asma's experience includes working in both humanitarian and development settings across different regions in Sudan while also working in different contexts of working with refugees, migrants, IDPs and vulnerable host communities. Asma's current work in Sudan project focuses on enhancing children and youth on the move protection, self-reliance, and wellbeing.

Eric Reeves

Eric Reeves is currently a Fellow at the Rift Valley Institute (Kenya, UK, U.S.). He has spent the past twenty-five years working virtually full-time as a Sudan researcher and analyst, publishing extensively both in the US and internationally. He has testified several times before the Congress, has lectured widely in academic settings, and has served as a consultant to a number of human rights and humanitarian organizations operating in Sudan. Working independently, he has written on all aspects of Sudan's recent history. His book about Darfur (A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide) was published in May 2007. In 2013 he published Compromising with Evil: An archival history of greater Sudan, 2007 — 2012 (available at no cost as an eBook). Brief reviews of these books may be found here. He is founder and co-chair of a humanitarian organization in Zamzam IDP camp, southwest of El Fasher. The focus has been responding to the devastating consequences of girls and women traumatized by sexual violence. As part of his work, Eric Reeves has served as an expert witness in dozens of asylum cases involving Darfuris; nearly all were eventually granted political asylum in the United States or Europe.

Hassan Ahmed Berkia

Hassan is a Sudanese journalist and co-founder of the Sudanese Journalist Network. Hassan has been a professional journalist for over a decade. He has worked for print, radio, TV, and online platforms. He has participated in and subsequently been a trainer for media workshops in Sudan and abroad.

Mathilde Vu

Mathilde Vu, is currently the Advocacy Manager for NRC in Sudan, with 10 years experience in Advocacy and Public Relations in humanitarian non governmental organisations in Sudan, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Jordan.

Ramona Padurean

Ramona Padurean is an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Specialist working at the Norwegian Refugee Council (Sudan). Ramona is also a European lawyer specialising in human rights and international law. Her past experiences in the NGO environment as well as at international level - the UN and the European Commission - have allowed her to acquire and refine that unique set of skills required when working in emergency or development. Multilingual, energetic and result-oriented, Ramona has a particular interest in contributing to initiatives that aim to promote human rights or empower vulnerable groups, whether that 's working in project management or in a technical specialist capacity.

Interview transcripts (in chronological order)

Interview with Hassan Ahmed Berkia on 4 February 2024

Asylos: Let's start with the first question: Is there a correlation between urban/rural settings and the number of children?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: The greater number of children, the greater percentage, in Sudan were living in Khartoum. The majority of those in Khartoum had been displaced from conflict-affected areas, for example before the separation of South Sudan, many came from there; after the separation, the greatest number of children were from areas like South Kordofan, south Blue Nile, the five states of Darfur and some states in Kordofan (there are three states in Kordofan some of which are unstable). Of course there are other areas like the north and the centre, but the majority are from those areas. In Khartoum they are known as "street children" or the local reference to them is "shammasa", they have been in Khartoum for many years but there is a surge in their numbers recently. It was unfortunate that the war expanded to Al Jazira state, because that's where most people fled, becoming the second most populated state in Sudan affected by the war. I read a number of stories of children who were displaced from Khartoum, to Al Jazira, then to Qadarif, they have lost contact with their parents.

There is a phenomenon where a good percentage of these children were attending Khalwa schools [religious schools that teach children Qur'an], most of the children in Khalwa schools were coming from Western Sudan, there were many of them in Khartoum, and after the war, similarly to other places, these children escaped from Khartoum to Al Jazira and other states and lost contact with their families. The suffering of children is clear, according to statistics and demographics, just as Sudan is the country with the greatest percentage of internally displaced people, the same applies for children who were exposed to displacement and exploitation, almost the greatest in the world, although I cannot prove it. I read a report in the Saudi Alsharq Alawsat newspaper where they quote UNICEF announcing that Sudan has the greatest number of children in displacement. I'll try to find and send you the link to double check the validity of this information. But given my exposure, I would say I support this assumption because Sudan's population is about 45 million people or even more.

Asylos: You spoke during your answer about "street children" who were displaced from war-stricken areas before April 2023. Were most of these children in Khartoum before the war?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Most of the big cities had street children, but as a phenomenon discussed in the media, the focus was on Khartoum. Khartoum's population according to statistics was around 10- 12 million, third of the population were living in Khartoum, so big cities like Port Sudan, Niyala, Madani, the percentage of displaced children is not little but not comparable to the numbers in Khartoum the capital.

Asylos: Moving on to family structure, what are the most common family structures (e.g., nuclear, extended, single-parent) in Sudan before the war and after?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: There were many big changes [that affected family structure after the war]. I will try to capture my observation in two parts. The most apparent phenomenon is that families experienced a kind of dispersal. After the war in Khartoum and its extension to Al Jazira, family members were displaced to different areas, for example the parents will be in Madani, a number of the children or kids would be in Port Sudan, Atbara, or other cities. A big number of families experienced dispersal, the same family became separated to many places. For example families who got displaced to the north and tried to enter into Egypt, there are some who remained at the border by Wadi Halfa, and a part of the family crossed into Egypt and the rest faced challenges or problems. So families are dispersed and separated whether inside Sudan or outside. This is the first phenomenon I am observing.

The second phenomenon concerns people who were displaced from Kharotum back to their original states, many of them had lost contact with their communities back there, but they were forced to return, and so you will find in the Sudanese villages, a single home may shelter 6 to 7 to 8 families in one house. For example, in the north where I come from, big or spacious houses usually shelter 3 or 4 people, currently such a home would shelter 5 or 6 families. There is overcrowding of course, life changed of course, the sense of privacy disappeared, the suffering increased, the costs increased, everything changed profoundly. These are the features of life in areas that are not suffering from war and fighting. Areas caught in the fighting of course their conditions are worse. If we speak about the situation in Darfur and the people who got displaced to Chad, the situation is worse, some organisations speak of children dying of hunger, because they cannot reach services: water, electricity, shops, even if there are services the access to them is not guaranteed, they are exposed to fighting and exploitation on their way to these services. This is the very bleak picture of the reality of Sudanese family structures today unfortunately.

Asylos: What is the average number of family members in a typical Sudanese family, according to your knowledge?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Sudan is like many other Arab countries; poorer regions have greater numbers of children. In the rural or the marginalised areas within Khartoum, that host a great number of displaced people, a single family may have an average of 8 or 9 or 10 children, at times more. However, in the more urban areas, in the capital for example, before the war, between 2 or 3 or 4 [children], but in the rural areas the number is higher, from 6 to 7, some areas the family size is about 11.

Asylos: Are you aware of governmental statistics that refer to the average number of family sizes in rural and urban regions in Sudan?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Not that I am aware of, but I will share them with you if I find specific documented numbers.

Asylos: Have there been any accounts or observations of children living or working on the streets facing harassment, mistreatment, or arrest by police or other state agents, and could you share insights on how these children are treated during and after their arrest?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Before the war [street children] were at risk of all sorts of exploitations and abuses, mostly because a great number of them lost contact with their families. Those who are in contact with their families, they come from very poor environments who didn't care for them but rather viewed them as burdens to get rid of. So these kids were 'used' in all sorts of ways; I remember in earlier years they were used in demonstrations and wars, which is terrible, they were also used for heavy labor while being paid very little, they are also exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation because they are in the streets and have no sorts of protection, no education, no awareness, nor an interest by the government [to provide support to them], nor provide the needed resources to tackle an issue of this magnitude. Every now and then a number of these children were taken [by the government] and put in schools, or the juvenile rehabilitation prisons, but many would escape and return to the streets. I remember some NGOs that worked with them through volunteerism, teaching them a craft or teaching them sports or football, a small number would escape street life but the greater number would return to it. They are also at risk of getting addicted to drugs (both local and imported) and alcohol, so they were already at risk of abuse and exploitation, and the worst of all, using them to fight in war.

Asylos: Do you know currently who is targeting children for armed recruitment, the army or RSF, or both?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Of course the RSF, at the beginning of the war, the clearer picture that was visible, the information that we were receiving and the media reports we were seeing and hearing, the RSF is using them more. The army, even if we have reservations towards it, it's an old institution that has more or less traditions or procedures when recruiting fighters; it's not easy for children to be recruited. However, at RSF, the nature of recruiting fighters is different, it is based on tribal relations and tempting them by offering money. Even before the war, people saw many children in military trucks. There is a photo that I posted on Twitter, photos of children in military vehicles after the war in Khartoum, with the RSF definitely more.

Asylos: Are there shelters for these children? Are there NGOs that work on rehabilitating these children?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: There used to be organisations, some governmental, others support externally, in Khartoum there were known places, but they were known to be simple and with little resources, so now they are probably destroyed or barely functional. Even for example in Qadarif or Port Sudan there are some, they are very simple, because most of them were in Khartoum and they did not fill the need.

Asylos: Can you share with us the countries from which refugee children and internally displaced people have had to flee?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: At the beginning of the war, adults and children sought asylum to neighbouring countries, mostly to Egypt, Chad, and some of them in Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan and the Central African republic. But the children in Darfur most of them went to Chad, and their situation was the worse than others, because they moved to places where tribal conflict is taking place now, most of these children belongs to the Masalit tribe (the African tribes) and they were forced to leave by Arab tribes that are allies with the RSF. Those children were displaced in worse conditions, on foot, some of them walked for days and for long hours until they reached the borders between Sudan and Chad, and many reports, Sky News and Al Jazeera and CNN and BBC produced terrifying reports about them. The children who crossed into Egypt, their conditions were relatively better, because those who left Khartoum, they were able to enter legally into Egypt at the beginning despite challenges, then later people started to use smuggling which had its own dangers. But about 300,000 entered at the beginning of the war legally. Most of the children out of those number entered schools, Sudanese schools (which face challenges), or Egyptian schools. In Ethiopia, South Sudan and Central Africa there isn't much information about their conditions.

Asylos: What about refugees in Sudan, from which countries do they come?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Most of the children seeking refuge in Sudan come from Western neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, Nigeria. And those who come from Eastern neighbouring countries like Eritrea and Ethiopia, from Southern borders come from South Sudan. To be honest those groups are not covered well in the media, because they live in bad conditions, on the margins of the capital. We heard some Ethiopians returned to Ethiopia, and some left Khartoum and moved to other cities [in Sudan]. But there is no information, no statistics, no proper news coverage, for sure their problems are bigger and their suffering is worse, they have gone from bad conditions to worse.

Asylos: Do you know which group is greatest in number?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Ethiopians are the greatest number.

Asylos: What about Syrians in Sudan?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Yes, Syrians and Yemenis. Most of the Syrians in Sudan had businesses, factories and companies, many of them lost thousands in their businesses, they were advanced in restaurants, established factories for perfumes and medicine, many of them lost a lot of money. Most of the Yemenis were students.

Asylos: As far as you know most of the Yemeni and Syrians in Sudan left the country at the beginning of the war?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Most of them left, yes, and those who didn't moved to Port Sudan and continued their work. But most of them lost money and their premises were ransacked. When European and Arab governments were evacuating their citizens, the Syrians and Yemenis were the last to leave from Port Sudan. They were facing challenges in Port Sudan in terms of shelter.

Asylos: For children from Ethiopia/Eritrea, who remained in Sudan, where are they staying? Are they sleeping in shelters? Are they hosted by Sudanese?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Most people were displaced to the East, closer to Ethiopia and Eritrea, so for example Kasala and Gadarif, there are common tribes between Sudan and Eritrea/Ethiopia. The schools there also have turned into shelters, most or all schools in Gadarif are filled with displaced persons who have fled from Khartoum or Madani or other places, so in these areas Eritreans and Ethiopians have relatives who have settled in Sudan for long years, mostly their conditions are like Sudanese but worse a bit, because they may face problems with the police, security apparatus and the like.

Asylos: displaced children in Sudan, despite their nationality, are they able to access any healthcare or educational services?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: The biggest problem facing children is education for sure. About 19 million children are out of schools now. Education is almost at a halt, even schools in Egypt aren't able to progress because they follow the Sudanese curriculum. Some families in Egypt had to move their children to Egyptian schools because of this problem. The problem is that if they are in advanced grades, like 6th or 7th, it's not simple to be transferred to the Egyptian curriculum. There is a real problem in regards to education. UNICEF tried in some areas like the north of Sudan and Halfa, to establish educational centres, and utilise electronic devices to assist the learning process but they are simple attempts that don't respond to the gravity of the need, it doesn't even cover 1% of the children. This is the real catastrophe.

The second catastrophe is the lack of access to healthcare services. No one knows what is happening to children's health, particularly in the area of malnutrition. Children at the age of growth, there's problems in their nutrition, their education, their healthcare services, this is a serious problem.

Asylos: Any other topic you'd like to talk about that we didn't discuss pertaining to Sudan, given your journalistic background and given that you are Sudanese yourself?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: The greatest fear I have is the use of children in the armed conflict agenda. Even if the war ended, these children would have been changed/impacted psychologically and profoundly, it will be difficult to reintegrate them back into society and the educational system, the challenges will be bigger. They have witnessed death, and they have become part of the war and the killings. This war wasn't comprised of killing only, it also came with looting, rape, robberies – all the bad things accompanying this war, I am afraid they were turned into criminals at such a young age.

Asylos: If god willing this war ends soon, do you think Sudan has the legislative and administrative tools needed to rehabilitate these children?

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: Sudan's legal and constitutional foundation is strong, but of course we will need to work on it and develop new laws, update old laws and upgrade our capacities. For sure Sudan after the war will be different from Sudan before the war. The psychological cracks/scars are massive. I will share this with you on a personal level, regional variations affect people's perspectives of one another right now: "those are from the North, those are from the West". These will cause problems that people will need to work hard on overcoming these regional challenges that have become clear and have come to the surface.

Asylos: We spoke earlier about healthcare services, but we didn't speak about mental health services.

Hassan Ahmed-Berkia: I remember we worked on reports about mental health services in Khartoum, and there were problems before the war, most of the hospitals and the medical staff that worked in this field were centred in Khartoum, which was the first spot that was hit and looted. I am sure that from an operational point of view this field has been disabled up to 90% throughout Sudan. All the hospitals that worked in the field of mental health are now occupied or have been looted, and the medical teams were already few, most of them migrated to Gulf countries with better job offers and salaries, which leads to a catastrophe. And sadly it is not discussed/acknowledged as it should be, despite the fact that during wars, people need to look into the psychological, therapeutic aspect of their wellbeing and awareness, this is a very important point that requires a whole portfolio in and of itself, in my opinion.

Interview with Mathilde Vu and Ramona Padurean on 7 February 2024

Asylos: I'll start off with the first question, which relates to general principles, nondiscrimination, including children of minorities and indigenous people. And the first question is, are there reports or evidence about state authorities or others discriminating against certain groups of children? If so, what is the situation they face?

Mathilde Vu: All right. So it's more than discrimination. There's been reports- and only, actually in West Darfur- of specific targeting of civilians, including children. So it's not believed that the children were the one targeted, but that civilians were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, particularly towards the Masalit community. So twice this year and to a very large scale, there was basically mass attacks against civilians along ethnic lines that, actually, the US has determined as ethnic cleansing, but it's not for us to say whether this is the case, but just to tell you how large-scale that was, in mainly two episodes of violence in mid-June 2023 and early November 2023, where the ethnicity Masalit was targeted by armed Arab groups affiliated with one of the party to the conflict, the Rapid Support Force. This has been documented at length by several human rights organisations and the UN. I could send you some of them. And this included the killing of children. There were also instances reported of sexual gender-based violence, including on girls, and that was also on the basis of their ethnicity. Same again for West Darfur.

Asylos: Thank you. Ramona, do you have anything to add?

Ramona Padurean: Perhaps a brief mention about the protection risk. That is very much, I mean, child protection risk that has come up and has been documented, especially in Darfur, and that also relates to the dynamics of the conflict there, which is the-- I would say the risk of recruitment is way more prevalent in Darfur, based on the reports established by child protection agencies and their contribution in the working groups, compared to other places, and also follows, like Mathilde was highlighting previously, ethnic lines, right. Whether it's risk of recruitment, which is enhanced, or whether it's, let's say, risk of being perceived as affiliated with a fighting group as a youth, even though you may not be. So those are also quite prevalent and are quite consistently reported in Darfur.

Asylos: Thank you. Do you know if it's been reported, recruitment for, affecting more boys or females?

Ramona Padurean: To be honest here, what I don't recall is if the (Source was a report that was published by colleagues, or if it's a report as in something that was stated and shared within the working group, which is a closer format. And I do believe that they mentioned that-- I mean, so no, both genders, so to speak, were noted at risk, albeit for different purposes, right. But, overarchingly and broadly speaking, those both constitute those forced recruitments, whether it's for, well, fighting purposes or whether it's for more support.

So, for example, girls would also be at risk of being recruited for fighting, even if it's not as active fighters, but as, let's say, well, supporting with all sorts of documented things from preparing meals to catering to needs of the fighters and so on.

Asylos: Thank you, and the next question is can children of ethnic, religious, languages, or indigenous minorities be heard in any procedures affecting them? If not, what are the obstacles they face?

Mathilde Vu: So just to say something about what Ramona said, I'll share with you-- there's been a few reports-- if Naomi, you can make sure that you highlight all the stuff that I said I will share with you. Reports of forced recruitment of children. At the moment, it's very true. I'm not sure whether it is along ethnic line or targeting a particular ethnicity. We believe that the RSF is mobilising along its tribal lineage but they're also going way further than that. So beyond the usual tribe, it's very much linked to-- as Ramona said, it's basically depending on the territory that they control then they would enforce recruitment on basically the population that is there, and that includes children. And there's been two reports, media this time, highlighting the number of, yeah, underage soldiers.

Asylos: Thank you. I'll repeat the second question. Can children of ethnic, religious, linguistic, or indigenous minorities be heard in any proceedings affecting them? If not, what obstacles do they face?

Mathilde Vu: Ramona, do you want to maybe say something about the refugees?

Ramona Padurean: Well, to be honest, the first point that we should start with is that currently, there's not many people being heard in court in Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict because there are, of course, systematic reports about the judiciary being virtually well suspended, even administrative bodies that are way less, let's say, sensitive and contentious, such as civil registry offices and so on, no longer work. So this is why it's a bit atypical and I would not be able to respond to that question beyond that because currently, I'd say because of that, not to a lesser or more extent than any other claimant seeking access to justice. Then, of course, for refugees, there's been an added element even before the outbreak of the war in April because language barriers were an issue. So this has been documented systematically because especially those that have no knowledge of Arabic or especially no one to actually help them would face the full extent of the consequences of having the language barrier, right. Whether they were Ethiopians or even South Sudanese because we do have reports of

this having been an issue for a bit. That's about it, too. From my point, I don't know Mathilde. Do you want to add anything else?

Mathilde Vu: No, nothing to add.

Asylos: Thank you. Then we can go on to the next section, which is political development, government structure, recent elections, policy, and possible political conflict. So the question is, what is the current government structure, and how does it affect children, i.e., regarding policy and laws?

Mathilde Vu: So the country is at war and all governance institutions have been shattered and are currently non-functioning or barely functioning. Since the destruction of the capital, you have basically a de facto government in exile in Port Sudan that has not succeeded in re-establishing levels of governance. I think one of the strongest examples is education. And since the beginning of the war-- so it's been now 10 months in a week-- all schools, all classes have been shut down, so there's been no back to school in September, and it has been cancelled. None of the teachers have been paid since March. So you have an entire generation and a large number of children that-- I mean, basically, all children right now in Sudan are currently out of school. There are a lot of stats about that that I will also share with you.

Other things that can impact children is the very fact that basic services, in general, are not functioning-- things related to protection services in particular. I mean, yeah, just from the government side, not existing, and everything is basically transferred to NGOs and UN agencies that have very little access to people and very little resources to support. So child protection services and things like that are also-- it's not even minimal. It's below minimal. I would also highlight that more than half of the country is now controlled or being contested by the opposition of the Rapid Support Force, which also has no experience in governance. So while there is some attempt from the Rapid Support Force to establish some type of governance, it's been basically our understanding from Darfur, for example, is that nothing is functioning, or-- yeah. So maybe, Ramona, you want to say something about the birth certificate because you know a bit better than me?

Ramona Padurean: Yes. One thing to add and which is quite actually important because of the consequences that it can lead to is the fact that because institutions are virtually paralyzed, right, including those responsible for registering vital events. Of course, coupled with the fact that depending on the demographics and on someone's profile, they may have been more sensitised to the need and importance of gaining a birth certificate as opposed to not, right. The fact is authorities competent to issue them are not functioning, and in the backdrop of the fact that we are in the war broke out, which has led to massive waves of displacement, some of them even beyond the border of Sudan. This significantly increases the chances of those children of becoming stateless. And we have reports of to which extent this is a risk. Why? And I think that's quite intuitively easy to understand that more a person will be remote from the territory whose citizenship they should be claiming, right, more difficult is going to be for that to function. Why? Because first of all, formally, the systems that are set up there would be to resort to a consulate most of the times. For example, in the cases of children born within Sudan that would reach Egypt or Tunisia because we have collaborations with established channels of communication with INGOs assisting Sudanese asylum seekers and even Sudanese people on the move in Tunisia or Egypt. And one of the barriers that they've-- or main or most complex challenges they mentioned was exactly this, that authorities in said countries have no authority or competence to register and provide them with birth certificates, if the birth did not happen on their territory, right? So then, you would have to resort to a consulate, which most of the time it's not going to be-- so the capacity is going to be extremely limited. Second of all, the cost associated with this. Third, with the actual probatory requirements for that to go down, it virtually becomes-- I mean, the chances of those children risking becoming stateless is extremely, extremely serious and prevalent. And of course, more time passes, more difficult it becomes, right, to work on that. So that is something that, in a nutshell, is a risk, both for those born within Sudan that have not left the territory that are IDPs, but also for those and even more so for those that have been multiply displaced and have decided with their caregivers to leave the country. I mean, just a last point on this, Fatima, which, of course, has rippling effects, right? Because if an individual is in this situation, this is something that you-- we're going to call it this, legally, you pass on, right? So it creates protection implications even for, well, then, potential descendants, and so on.

Asylos: Thank you. Then we can move on to the next question, which is under the section of refugee children and internally displaced persons. The question is, how many children have fled their country with family into Sudan?

Mathilde Vu: I'll indicate to the website where you can actually get the numbers. Just so that you know, I think we are now at 9 million people internally displaced in the country and 1.5 refugees. So 1.5 people who have crossed the borders into Chad, Egypt, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and to some extent, CAR [Central African Republic] as well. There's also people in Libya and Uganda and so on. And I think that UNHCR has some desegregation of age, and I believe that IOM too. So I'll send that to you, and you can just go through the report and find it.

Asylos: Thank you. That leads me on to the next question, which countries have they fled? You did said you will send a report from IOM or UNHCR to cover that.

Mathilde Vu: Yeah.

Asylos: Thank you. I would like to follow with the question of where do refugee children live.

Ramona Padurean: Now let me just stop here to clarify. You mean refugee children that are within Sudan?

Asylos: Yes.

Ramona Padurean: Or you mean Sudanese refugee children?

Asylos: Refugee children living in Sudan.

Ramona Padurean: So because most of the refugee children within Sudan are going to be—I mean, there are other caseloads as well. They're going to be mainly Ethiopians or South Sudanese, and they mainly live in Mathilde, I think the way we call them [camps] In the context of refugees, we can use this term because they're collective sites and camps.

Mathilde Vu: Refugee camps. Yep.

Mathilde Vu: So you have a population of something like 950,000 refugees inside the country of different nationalities. The biggest representation is South Sudanese, then you have Eritrean, then it's Ethiopian. Then you also have smaller communities of Syrians, and then after a bunch of other people. So really, Sudan, before the war, was a country of asylum. Before the war, the refugees were either in refugee camps in the east of the country in Gedaref and Kassala for Eritrean and Ethiopian, or in the south of the country in White Nile, South Kordofan, and to some extent, a little bit also in North Darfur with South Sudanese. There was also a large number of refugees and people who were unregistered in the capital of Khartoum. So when the war started and basically the capital was shattered and became a war zone, you have all that community of refugees that had to flee Khartoum. The numbers, I'll have to look it up again, but most of the refugees that were in Khartoum went to White Nile because most of them were South Sudanese. And so they went to the camps of South Sudan, while a smaller number, the ones who were Eritrean and Ethiopians went to the East in Kassala. What you have to understand as well is that they were not really given the choice, meaning that it's not like they could go, for example, and stop in another city. The government of Sudan imposes that actually they are directed to camps, and unless they return to the country of origin, which some of them did, they have no option but to remain in camps. So there is an encampment policy being imposed on refugees, and that has been quite reinforced since the war. And that obviously includes all the children there. Small proportion went back to South Sudan, and I put a quote unquote back because especially for South Sudanese, some of them actually were never even there in the first place. They were born in Khartoum because of the history of the cessation and basically ended up in South Sudan. So at the beginning of the first eight months of the war, the largest number of people crossing into South Sudan were actually South Sudanese nationals, registered or unregistered refugees. Now, the trend is a little bit more nuanced and you have more and more Sudanese as well crossing into White Nile. And it's the same for the Ethiopian and Eritrean. We don't really know the number of returnees. My experience having met with Eritreans, especially, is that there's a lot of Eritreans that have decided to remain in Sudan because there is just zero option for them to go back to Eritrea where they would be at risk.

Asylos: Thank you. You already mentioned the different camps, the refugees of different origin live in. Because my next question would be if there are any shelters for them and if there are any organisations involved in the protection of children living and/or working on the streets?

Mathilde Vu: For refugee children?

Asylos: Yes.

Mathilde Vu: So the issue of shelter for refugees was complicated, especially in the beginning of the war because a lot of refugees were sort of in transit in intermediary cities before they were transferred to camp. And here I would say forcibly transferred to camps. So they were definitely in difficult conditions like everybody else's, IDPs as well were living in collective shelters in schools and sometimes also in the street as they were fleeing Khartoum. There's been some efforts done by humanitarian organisations, including ours NRC [the Norwegian Refugee Council] to build new houses. So for example, in the camps of Um Gargour in Gedaref, which is a camp that welcomes Eritrean and Ethiopians, NRC was the one providing emergency shelter for newer arrivals from Khartoum. Same in the camp of Um Rakuba in Gedaref. There's one camp in the Further East, Babikri that hasn't received a lot of support. The big issue is for the ones who went to White Nile, which has already also a lot of—so it already has 10 refugee camps that were also at maximum capacity. And in some of the refugee camps, the population has doubled. So the last time I was there in October, I have seen seven refugee family, for example, sharing one family tent inside a camp because they had newly arrived or arrived over this past three, four months into the camp, and there was just not enough support, not enough space, and not enough resources to actually allocate them with a shelter that is more dignified. So it's definitely an issue.

Asylos: And now, specifically on internally displaced children, do they have any access to education and health services?

Mathilde Vu: No. So as explained to you, the schools have been shut down since the beginning of the war. So currently, unless humanitarian organisations. Like ours, for example, creates a small, temporary program for learners and so on in temporary learning centres. They will not have access to education. And even the offer that is given from the humanitarian community, it's temporary and doesn't replace any formal education. So at the moment, no children in Sudan have access

to education. I would put a caveat, actually, for the Ethiopian refugees in the camps because we've been able to maintain some type of education services to them as NRC, in a more it was a program that we were running before the war, and we were able to maintain that, actually, throughout. That would be the only exception. And in terms of access to health, you have something like 70% of the health facilities in conflict zones that are shut down, according to WHO. I will send you also the data itself because I think I'm misquoting it maybe.

So basically, just consider that healthcare has collapsed in the country, and there's no significant access to health. It's particularly the case in areas controlled by the RSF and areas basically that are contested. I believe that there's only two functioning Phoenix or Medical Center in the capital at the moment where there are still people trapped there and very little across the country. Obviously, a huge issue noting that Sudan is going through a cholera outbreak on top of measles. There was a measles outbreak earlier in the year and had already quite a fragile profile when it comes to access to it.

Asylos: Thank you. And then I would like to follow to the last section of questions of this interview regarding the returning separated or unaccompanied children and families. My first question will be whether there are any counselling or mediation services available to assist children in re-establishing contact with the family in Sudan. If so, by whom?

Mathilde Vu: So the only family tracing services that I've heard of, is from the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross].

Asylos: And do you know whether they're still active now?

Mathilde Vu: I couldn't comment on that.

Asylos: Okay. Thank you. And by the way, Ramona, if you want to add anything, just feel free to jump in.

Ramona Padurean: Nothing to add.

Asylos: Thank you. Now I would like to follow with the question of whether there are children and their families allowed to settle where they would like upon return. You already mentioned earlier with the refugee camps that there's not really the freedom of moving, that they're quite limited. And, if returned children have access to any rehabilitation services, or if there are any form of discrimination upon return.

Mathilde Vu: So at the moment, there's no return, really. There's only very ad hoc reports of people forced to return to, for example, Khartoum. I've met with several families who had been displaced in the east who told me that their fellow relatives of so-and-so, had to leave the displacement sites where they were, the gathering sites where they were, and return back to Khartoum because the living conditions were so difficult in the east. They had little access to services, no way of livelihood, and they were living basically in classrooms with other people and other families. And they took the risk to go back to Khartoum with the family.

The few cases that I heard of, it was mostly men going back, but also to check the house. But I also heard about families. I think that it's not being monitored at the moment. It's very difficult to do this, so there's no data on that. And I would say at the moment, it remains anecdotal when it comes to this type of returns. What is sure is that once there are returns, there are literally zero services available.

Ramona Padurean: And yes, and to add a bit of what Mathilde was saying, oftentimes, when we do reach that stage in that phase of the conflict where, let's say, returns are possible. So we're thinking beyond the pendular movements that Mathilde was saying, is when we need to distinguish between these we would call pendular movements when we would have head of the household, or one of the members of the family or a couple of members of the family going in to check on their assets, to check on their integrity, and so on, but not to really with the intention of returning, right.

So if the conflict reaches the phase of where returns, albeit even in a few months, may be possible. One of the main barriers to this, or let's say one of the aspects that needs to be dealt with very carefully are HLP-related issues. So Housing, Land and Property [HLP] issues because secondary occupation may be a problem. Some aspects, HLP issues have actually been weaponized or one of the driving forces of the conflict in said areas. And of course, this is not directly targeted to children, but since they're caregivers because the whole list impacts the whole household, right. And it represents a barrier for both the caregivers as well as the children to sustainable and safe returns.

However, having said that, that's something that we've documented across several other contexts. Currently, the Sudan context is not one that we would have reports of this being yet an issue because I don't think we are witnessing returns per se, as Mathilde was saying.

Asylos: And then the last question, I would like to rephrase it a bit because you have already indicated that education is nearly impossible to access for children. And also, earlier, you touched upon the issue of birth certificates as a form of documentation. I would still like to ask before the shutdown of education of schools, if there were any reports on returning children to Sudan who have no access to school or drop out of school because of problems with language or the absence of appropriate documentation.

Mathilde Vu: I don't have information on this. I don't think as an NRC, we track that.

Asylos: Okay. I would just like to ask Ramona and Matilda if there's anything that you would like to comment on that we haven't covered in the questions?

Ramona Padurean: Perhaps on my end, just to flag something, so we are working on a report regarding refugees' access to legal identity and civil documentation. So it also provides a breakdown as per the different types of documents and then the different kinds of barriers for this. And I do think that we will be publishing. I don't know if you're excerpts of all of it, but perhaps once that is finalised, Mathilde, we could also share them, right, with the colleagues at Asylos so that they can complement the findings and the detailed level of information that you've collected so far.

Mathilde Vu: Yes

Asylos: Thank you, that would be great.

Interview with Eric Reeves on 7 February 2024

Asylos: Let's start off with the first question. In section demographic information, which was the statistical data on children in Sudan. Referencing the UNICEF state profiles data, which contain data about the number of children in individual states, in the draft report, can you share any insights or observations on how the number of children in families tends to vary between urban and rural settings?

Eric Reeves: If we're looking at Darfur, and this is true, I think, for most of Sudan, certainly where there are serious differences in how people make a living. In Darfur, before the genocide began in 2003, it was estimated that-- let's recall that there is no census. There never has been, and that intermarriage is common, that populations of different ethnic groups tend to mingle more in urban settings. But if we're talking about the vast majority of Darfur, we're talking about a population that was roughly two-thirds non-Arab, African, and one-third Arab. The Arab population was primarily nomadic pastoralists, herding camels, cattle, [and] other livestock. And having many children was desirable, but not so much as it was for people who were sedentary agriculturalists, the non-Arab-African populations. They would have children for labour of a sort that was not required by nomadic pastoralists. Again, in the absence of a real census, which has never been taken in Darfur, we have only estimates. The pre-war estimates I have seen had the total population of Darfur ranging from 5 million to 7.5 million. That's a very, very large disparity. I think the consensus among a wide range of (Sources would be 6 million to 6.5 million pre-war. My own research on mortality suggests that as many as-- well, over half a million people have been killed directly or indirectly from the violence perpetrated by the Janjaweed and subsequently by the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces as well. So there would be some disparity, but it's not quantifiable, the difference in family size. And it's changed also because so many children who might be able to earn a living abroad are leaving Darfur if they possibly can. There's no employment in camps. Some children of working age can work in El Fasher, in the case of Zamzam or Nyala before it was taken over by the RSF from Kalma Camp and Otash Camp. So we're really lacking in demographic data. It's a huge gap.

And the estimates of the number of internally displaced people also range all over the place. The last UN Darfur humanitarian profile had the IDP population at around 2.7 million. This is in March or rather January 2009. At the time, there were roughly 350,000 Darfuris refugees, all non-Arab African, in Eastern Chad. That number has grown to well over 500,000. The number of IDPs, I see various estimates from the UN and other organizations that are INGOs, I don't think we know. The seizure of Nyala by the Rapid Support Forces created a huge exodus. Many of the people went to Zamzam, where the population is now probably closer to 450,000 than the 400,000 that was estimated by the sheikhs and Omdas who are the governance bodies or individuals within Zamzam, often specific to a village or a tribal group.

Asylos: Thank you, moving on to the next question, which is in the section of existence of ethnic, religious, and Linguistic Minorities or Indigenous Groups. Can you share any data or insights on the population of children within a specific minority or indigenous communities in Sudan, which includes Nubian, South Sudanese, Beja, Kopf, Dinka, Orr, and Nuba?

Eric Reeves: Well, Sudan has been at war with itself for so many years, and such census work as we've seen has been badly compromised by lack of access, and I've seen nothing that allows for a breakdown of population within minority and indigenous groups. When you say Nubians, you mean Nubia, not Nuba I assume? There's a difference.

I was actually in the Nuba Mountains. I was not able to travel very far into Sudan, but I did get to the Nuba Mountains. The Nuba Mountains do have a number of tribes, and they're all linked under the rubric Nuban. But there are no tribal animosities of the sort that there are in Darfur. On the other hand, there has been no access to the Nuba Mountains, certainly for census purposes for as long as I can remember. It's important to remember that we've seen two genocides, one beginning in 2011 and in some sense continuing. The latest malnutrition data for South Kordofan, including the Nuba Mountains, is extremely grim. But throughout the '90s, the Nuba Mountains were subject to-- whatever genocide scholar I

speak with would describe as genocide. And genocides make very poor context for gathering demographic and other data. So we don't know. We know a lot of Nubans were displaced. We knew a lot died. We knew a lot moved to Sudan. I should say Khartoum and the Khartoum urban environment. The same is true of South Sudanese. Many, many, many, as many as 2 million moved to the Khartoum area. I don't know what the number of Nubans would be. It wouldn't be nearly that great, but it would be a very substantial part of the population. But even in Khartoum, there was never an effort to count the population groups or numbers within those groups.

Asylos: Thank you. Do you know if there are notable differences in the number of children across various ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups in Sudan, such as Nubians, South Sudanese, Beja, Copts, Dinka, Fur, and Nuba?

Eric Reeves: I don't have any information there.

Asylos: Thank you. And now moving on to basic legal information on Sudan. According to 28 too many, the FGM Research Institution, the National Council for Child Welfare is the government authority that coordinates work in collaboration with UNFPA and UNICEF joint program, which have been working in Sudan since 2008. The question is, are you familiar with the National Council for Child Welfare in Sudan? And if so, could you share whether the mandate extends beyond FGM and covering other children's issues and rights and what areas do they focus on?

Eric Reeves: To be honest, I've never heard of the National Council for Child Welfare. I suspect it is part of the Humanitarian Aid Commission, which is a notoriously politicised and government-serving organisation. It did a great deal to impede and continues to impede. In some sense, its vestiges continue to impede the access for humanitarian groups to Darfur. I can only give you an opinion about the National Council for Child Welfare. And that said, it did nothing. If you look at the experience of children in Khartoum and the urban environments, if you look at the experience of children in the peripheral regions, I see no evidence of a government body that has done anything of substance to assist children in distress. That's an opinion. But, again, I've worked on Sudan for 25 years, and I've never heard of the National Council for Child Welfare. And I suspect it's there in name only. And it would be interesting to know if there's a budget line. Now the regime of Omar al-Bashir was notorious for distorting the national budget. So even a budget line would mean nothing. But it would be interesting to know if it even showed up.

Female genital mutilation is an issue that is taken very seriously, especially in the marginalized areas. It is not so much a problem in Khartoum, although it occurs frequently there as well. But it's a very serious problem in Darfur and other peripheral regions. There's a wonderful story by a Sudanese Darfuri doctor called Tears of the Desert. I think her name is Halima Bashir. But it gives an extraordinary account of what we might call the sociology of FGM. And she herself experienced it, was then raped by her Janjaweed captors. She's now in the UK I believe. But it's an extremely private matter. It is supported by a very long tradition of the practice, which is only gradually fading away. I think one of the benefits of people being in IDP camps is that they see that while all the girls in the village may have endured FGM-- their personal village may have been cut, they encounter many women who've not, girls who've not. So I think there's a growing consensus in Sudan that this is a harmful practice, that it is highly discriminatory, painful, and unnecessary for women. But throughout the Horn of Africa and indeed the larger northeastern part of Africa, it's a very serious problem. But we have no data. I've never seen data. And it would have to be collected at the village level rather than the urban areas. And that just hasn't been done.

Asylos: Thank you. The next question in the same section would be could you identify any NGOs or civil society groups such as child rights coalitions that are active and relevant in the area of children's rights?

Eric Reeves: Well, UNICEF is nominally the UN body responsible. Save the Children is an INGO that has a particular focus. But it's important to remember, there's only one active INGO in Darfur present, and that's MSF. They've got a small small clinic in Zamzam. I understand they are planning to ramp up in the area, but the INGOs that may have taken on a particular responsibility for children are no longer in Darfur. In the rest of the country, insecurity is making it more and more difficult to gain access, to move provisions. Did I send you the map of the major arteries for transportation of humanitarian supplies and personnel? I'll send that to you, and it shows---just how badly the country has been cut off from the aid that is in Port Sudan but can't move west or south of Kosti, which is just to the south of Khartoum.

Asylos: Thank you. Moving on to the next question is, In light of the interim Sudanese Constitution's guarantee that children born to Sudanese parents have an inalienable right to nationality and citizenship, could you share whether this right is fully respected and implemented, especially in relation to Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Eric Reeves: The Sudanese Constitution promulgated in the Declaration of August 2019 is utterly meaningless, utterly meaningless. If you look at the Rapid Support Forces, which now control at least half the country, I doubt you could find more than a dozen members who understand anything of the interim Constitution or what the phrase inalienable right means, what citizenship means. These are people who in the main come from nomadic pastoralist backgrounds. Hemedti himself moved to South Darfur when he was very young. He grew up. He's often described as a camel trader. In fact, he was a camel thief. But the idea of citizenship, especially along the Chad/Darfur borders, is meaningless. And most of the RSF comes from Darfur, from Chad, from Niger, from Mali. So these are people-- and if you look at a map, you'll see that

these countries are defined by big straight lines drawn by colonial powers. And Zaghawa, for example, are on both sides of the border in very large numbers. The president of Chad, the son of Idriss Deby- the son is now President Deby- is himself Zaghawa. So much more important than borders are ethnic groups, and citizenship is a meaningless concept for the Rapid Support Forces.

And insofar as the Sudan Armed Forces controls Sudan, it abrogated the Constitution blatantly with the coup of October 2021 and further abrogates all international law with its systematic and continuing atrocity crimes not only to defeat the RSF but with immense collateral damage, including children. The protections of children-- we constantly have reports of children being abused, children being raped, children being abducted. The phrase inalienable right to nationality and citizenship is meaningless in a country that is, in fact, a failing state.

Asylos: Thank you. Moving onto the next question, could you provide any information on whether children belonging to minorities and indigenous populations face discrimination by state authorities or other groups? And if so, what challenges do these children encounter?

Eric Reeves: We're talking in some ways primarily about Khartoum and the ways in which people from South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, and other marginalised areas were abused with hateful racial epithets. Women were flogged publicly for selling beer. Sharia in Sudan was extremely strict. It was one of the last countries to preserve all the provisions of the harshest regime of Hudud, the penal provisions of Hudud, including cross amputation, crucifixion for apostasy. But children were abused systematically. Well, let me qualify that. Children were abused very, very frequently on the basis of their place of origin, their linguistic abilities. Many Darfuris speak with an Arabic accent that is not the classic Arabic of Khartoum or Saudi Arabia or Jordan. When I was doing asylum cases, I did a great many in which it was clear that the interpreter was perhaps Lebanese, Jordanian, or Saudi Arabian and did not understand the answer provided by the Darfuri speaking, the person speaking in Arabic, but not an Arabic familiar, so the translator would just put down what he or she thought was being said rather than what is accurate. So that's a form of discrimination that exists in Sudan but also outside of Sudan.

Asylos: Can you point us to any particular reports or sources to support this?

Eric Reeves: I have a number of files from the Home Office in the UK, for example, a couple of cases from mainland Europe or Continental Europe, but I'm not allowed to share those. So I can say I have seen in my own work as a representative of asylum applicants that their language affects a kind of discrimination against them on the basis of dialect, and there are still a few Darfuris who do not have Arabic as their first language but one of their ethnic languages. This is increasingly rare, but there are some cases some feel more comfortable speaking in their native tongue, even if Arabic is obviously the lingua franca of Darfur. And so sometimes they had to find a Zaghawa or a Masalit or a Fur or a Berti translator, which is very, very difficult to do. And it's very difficult to assess other than the applicant's own complaints about inaccurate translation. But this is going to be a problem going forward for those areas of Sudan that speak a non-standard Arabic.

Asylos: Thank you, can children of ethnic, religious, linguistic, or indigenous minorities be heard in any proceedings affecting them? If not, what obstacles do they face?

Eric Reeves: They will all be Muslim if they're from Darfur. I forget what the percentage of Sudan as a whole is as Muslim. My guess would be around 70 to 75 percent. Large Christian populations in southern Blue Nile, South Kordofan. But in some places, like Darfur, it's entirely Muslim. And here's the big qualification. Many River Nile Sudanese don't believe that the Nuba or the Abeyi can be proper Muslims, that their ethnicity in some sense disqualifies them, which is ironic since in Darfur, the sedentary farmers, the non-Arab groups, tend to be more devout than the nomadic pastoralists. But it's still the case that children, as well as adults, are frequently deemed incapable of being true Muslims because of their ethnicity. It's weird. But it has been a fact for a long time.

Asylos: Thank you. Then we can move on to the next section, which is on the best interest of child. Are the best interest of the child central in the decision-making with regards to the child? And how is the child in any way involved in decision-making processes? How does this apply in practice? So there's a couple of questions.

Eric Reeves: I don't know of any decision-making process that has any integrity or meaning. I've done a lot of work on Sudan. And I've never heard of such a thing as a central decision-making process with regard to children. Children from the peripheral regions are just not going to be served by any government agency. The al-Bashir regime was immensely hostile. They couldn't really control population migration. But they could make it difficult in various ways. And one of them would be they're going to ignore the welfare of children, which they did relentlessly, consistently.

Asylos: Thank you. And then the next session is family structure. For this, we have what are the most common family structures, so the nuclear extended single parent in Sudan?

Asylos: The next question under family structure is, what are the most common family structures in Sudan?

Eric Reeves: I think it would be in the case of Darfur, which I know much, much better than other regions of Sudan. But I suspect it is true of rural agricultural families as well. The most common family structure I would describe as nuclear, but

with important extended features. For example, in Darfur, it would often be not the mother but the aunt who would take an adolescent girl through the process of general mutilation. There are very tight bonds in small villages. And so family, as well as ethnicity, tribe, village, is very important. I would say in Sudan, in the urban areas, you have family structures that are much closer to what we would call a purely nuclear family. But the relationship of aunts and uncles and cousins is always important in Sudan.

Asylos: Thank you, then the following on from that question is how many children are living in each type of family structure if you have knowledge of this?

Eric Reeves: The number I hear before or the number I've read many times before the war was that the average was five to six with a consensus probably being closer to five per family. Now, the genocide beginning in 2003 immediately made a huge number of orphans. We have no census for the number of orphans, even though we know it's hundreds of thousands. Many of them have been taken in by foster families, but many families have been disrupted, separated by violence. The efforts to reunite families are carried on in earnest by those who are in a position to communicate with other IDP camps or towns, villages. But that's an extremely difficult process in a land that is wracked by violence is so chaotic and in which so many people have died. I'll pause here to talk about mortality. If you look at a newspaper, you will see that the mortality figure given is 300,000. It's called a UN figure. Well, it is a UN figure, but it comes from an April 2008 press conference by Sir John Holmes, who was head of OCHA at the time. Well, it's now 16 years since that time, and violence has been unrelenting and accelerated dramatically with the creation of the Rapid Support Forces in 2013. We have a very important study called Darfuri Voices that was published in August of 2010. I've collated all the data there is. I mean, all the data that is available. And the figure I come up with is 600,000 very, very roughly, have died. If you've got 600,000 dead not directly from violence, but from the causes, the conditions created by violence. That's going to tear huge tears in the social fabric, the family fabric. And if the UN is content to let stand a mortality figure from 2008 today, what does that say about their willingness to conduct any kind of census for orphans, for family size, family size in IDP camps? I know Zamzam camp extremely well. I know that it's quite chaotic. The family size, number of orphans, number of disabled people who are attended by other families, the very elderly who are helped by my project. But if Darfur is representative, then what we can say is that the international community has failed dramatically. I look at the next question on Blue Nile, slightly more than 1.3 million. Well, how the hell do they know that? When was the last census? Who conducted the census? What professional standards were in place? I think the answers to all those questions make that a nonsense figure. It might be right. It's probably in the ballpark, but slightly more. It was Aristotle who said, "When you seek more precision in a given problem permits a solution to, you're going to create a fundamental logical error." You can't be more precise than the data allows be another way of putting it. And the data doesn't allow a phrase like slightly more than 1.3 million. It just doesn't exist. Blue Nile was one of the most isolated parts of Sudan during the north-south Civil War. It was one of the two contested areas along with the Nuba Mountains. And it's nice to have numbers. Obviously, you want numbers. I want numbers, but we have to be very, very careful to see what margins of error there are, I would say, for my figure of 600,000. It's probably less. It could be 100,000 less. But 500,000 is very, very different from 300,000. And I would say it's symptomatic of the United Nations to be content with this mortality figure, which you must see constantly repeated in The Guardian, in The New York Times, The Washington Post. You name it, and the figure will be there. Interestingly, The Guardian one time used my figure, but it's the only time I've seen my figure used, even as I've never received a statistical criticism of my work or methodology or the data I've used. But the UN is very, very sloppy with figures. Former head of UN Operations in Sudan, Georg Charpentier, was relentlessly abusing data to lower the figure for IDPs. It was just shameful. And even when it could be demonstrated that his own figures didn't compute in the way that he was telling us they were supposed to compute. He was just shameless. He was lying, in effect, as were other elements of the UN and UNIMET when it came to Darfur.

Asylos: Thank you. The next section that we move on to is political development. And in this section, the question is, what is the current government structure and how does it affect children, and that's including policies and laws?

Eric Reeves: Well, there is no governmental structure except in an abstract sense with the government in exile in Port Sudan. But that's just the Sudan Armed Forces. There is nothing in current governmental structures, either as we think of them in terms of what power the RSF controls or what power the SAF controls. There aren't policies. There aren't laws. There just aren't. Who would enforce them? How would they enforce them? Where would they enforce them? The current governmental structure is an oxymoron. There is no governmental structure. The government consists of men with guns wielding them how they will, where they will. But that's the only government. And it's a government by violence and terror. It's not a government in any recognizable sense. And that's why I come back to the point I made earlier. Sudan is on the verge of becoming a failed state in which all of these questions about government become meaningless.

Asylos: Thank you. Moving on to the next section on family environments. Under family environments and alternative care in Sudan, the question is: Do you have any information on the prevalence of blood feuds in Sudan? Are they widespread across regions, or are they common in Pacific areas? And if so, could you specify which regions are most affected?

Eric Reeves: Well, it's interesting. It varies tremendously. There are no blood feuds in the Nuba Mountains, for example, even though there are different tribes falling under the rubric Nuba. It used to be the case. There have always been blood feuds. There still are often between Arab tribal groups. There are also particularly specific hatreds. So the Zaghawa, for example, are especially disinclined to like the Northern Rizeigat, who are the basis for the Janjaweed and now the Rapid Support Forces. They were particularly hard hit by the Rapid Support Forces coming from the Northern Rizeigat. I wouldn't call that a blood feud. I'd call that radical ethnic animosity between the two groups.

But there are blood feuds. They appear off and on in Darfur between primarily Arab groups. But I don't think when we're talking about the genocidal destruction of one ethnic family by another ethnic family, Arab, non-Arab, that we call that a feud. It's genocide. And in the past, when there have been conflicts between Arab and non-Arab groups, especially when it comes to rural areas where crops had been planted are perhaps ready to be harvested or earlier in the season. But the leaders of the nomadic pastoralists who were moving through a farm area and the owners of the farm area would negotiate-- I forget the Arabic word, a settlement fee. How much damage did we do? What would be fair to repay you for that? Now, that wasn't always the case, but often conflict was settled in that fashion. That has all gone. And, in fact, what we see now are the Janjaweed militias, the kind of ad hoc Arab militias, and the RSF deliberately taking their cattle onto farms, especially those farms where the crops are on the verge of harvesting-- letting their animals forage. It's one of the reasons we have such an acute food shortage in Darfur today. There are different reasons for different food shortages. And in Sudan as a whole, the gradual withering of the agricultural sector under al-Bashir is responsible for the chronic hunger that we see. And we've known for a long time just how bad it is. There was a UNICEF study that was so damning that they didn't dare publish it. INGOs saw it, but UNICEF wouldn't release it publicly. It's just staggering, the levels of malnutrition that have existed for many, many years. Now throughout the country, we're seeing increasing levels of malnutrition, not just in Darfur but everywhere.

In Darfur, though, it's the destruction of farmland, the insecurity that prevents people from working their farms that has created the most serious food shortage.

Asylos: Moving onto the next question, who traditionally takes care of orphans or children separated from their parents and family?

Eric Reeves: If children are separated from their family it's-- I would call it kindness of strangers. Perhaps more likely if the same ethnic group, a Zaghawa child, or Masalit child, or Berti child. But displacement in Darfur has been so chaotic that there's really no way to ensure that a child will find any way of connecting with parents or family. I have on my desk-- this is all that I have on my desk in many ways. And it's a young boy, a wide-open expanse in Eastern Chad, and he has no parents, no family, no village members, nothing. There are far, far too many such children. So the question just simply changes character when you're talking about the aftermath of genocide. The reuniting of families or reuniting of orphans with families is hit-or-miss. Most of the time. The vast majority of the time it's miss. In Zamzam, there are many families. And we give them special attention. Mothers taking in orphans. Because no one else will. There are many orphans in the camp who are unattached to any family.

Asylos: In camp Zamzam, how are the 'unattached' children taken care of?

Eric Reeves: Many drift towards Al Fashir. The displaced population in Al Fashir itself is very large. This is one of the places where they might get employment, making bricks or other hard labour. In the camp, I'm not sure how we are responding to individual cases. It would depend on the age. Whether it's an infant, whether it's a child of eight or nine, or whether it's a child that might be able to earn a living. I know it's cruel to think of a child ten years old being part of the labour market, that's often how it is. The project has 20 psychosocial counsellors. When I started the project it was mainly to respond to the needs of rural women who had been the victims of genocidal violence which often meant rape or gang rape. And psychosocial counselling for such women is about the lowest priority in typical menu of humanitarian responses. But it is devastating, just devastating. So many of these women suffer from terrible PTSD. They have suicidal ideation, and in many cases, commit suicide. They're socially ostracised. In many cases they have fistulas, terrible traumatic fistulas. We are providing traumatic fistula surgery to three women and girls a month. The testimonials would break your heart to see what they have been through and what they've been denied, the normal life they resume after surgery. But these counsellors have evolved from being psychosocial counsellors to one of the most important bodies within it's called Team Zamzam, one of the most important assessment bodies within the camp. Zamzam is divided into four quadrants. They make a point of going to every one of them. It's a huge footprint, obviously, because all the dwellings are one-story high. There are no two-story buildings or very, very few. So they're constantly making assessments. And if a child were truly bereft of all family, all help, I suspect what they have been doing, I could ask specifically, is trying to link the child to a family willing to take in an orphan. But the fact that I know as much as I do about Zamzam and don't know how to answer that question definitively makes clear, I think, how chaotic the situation is for children in a camp of 450,000 people.

Asylos: Thank you, moving on to the next question: Which state authority, so ministry, is responsible for the overarching child protection system or services, including budget and policy.

Eric Reeves: That's just a grim joke at this point. There is no ministry for child protection. There are no child services. You need a functioning government to provide those things. And there is no functioning government. Khartoum is one vast battlefield. Port Sudan, which is where the SAF and General al-Burhan are, is about as remote a place in Sudan as you can be. They can't provide anything. They have no resources. You've got to have resources to do any of these things, and they just don't exist. There is, as I say, no ministry responsible for child protection or services. There's no policy. There's no budget. The fighting in Sudan is in many ways simply about wealth, money, power. Power and money are interchangeable. And that's what Hemedti and al-Burhan are seeking. They're not going to create a budget for child protection. It's what happens when you have a failed state such things become utterly inconceivable.

Asylos: Thank you. Moving onto the next question, is the Child Protection System organised centrally, nationally, or is it decentralised, so by regional or at a community level?

Eric Reeves: It's at the community level, and it's not funded or supported by a central government. There is no longer a central government. You have competing political factions. You have a big division between the forces allied with al-Burhan in Port Sudan and Hemedti in Khartoum and elsewhere in the country, especially Darfur. But the security and the assistance to children, including education, are entirely a function of what can be provided locally. Certainly, once you're outside the riverine on Khartoum urban area. And in Khartoum itself, it's a wasteland.

Asylos: Thank you and the next question is, do you have any information on how social services are financed?

Eric Reeves: I don't know of any social services. Not at present. I don't even know if the Humanitarian Aid Commission, which was the umbrella body within the government-- whether it exists or functions. I'd be interested to see the last time HAC, as it's called, has said anything. I think we're at a point where we need to accept that children are more vulnerable than they could be at just about any other place in the world.

Asylos: Thank you. So are specific groups of children overrepresented in the juvenile justice system? If so, which groups?

Eric Reeves: It's certainly the case that dark-skinned people, whether they be from the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, South Sudan, Darfur, are certainly discriminated against. They're often beaten gratuitously by the police. They're incarcerated. They're denied educational opportunities. So discrimination is rampant.

They're certainly way overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. And [the] juvenile justice system implies there's a justice system that distinguishes between adults and children in Khartoum that doesn't really exist.

Asylos: Thank you. So we're moving on to the next section on victims of child trafficking now. In the context of trafficking, is the sale of children taking place?

Eric Reeves: I have heard very numerous reports that this is so, that girls are being sold in markets. There's one market actually in Khartoum. If you want to buy a girl, you may do so here. Abductions of children have been commonplace since the beginning of the genocide. Children trying to make it to the Libyan coast often are trafficked by people who say, "We'll get you to the coast. We'll get you to the coast." And then, in effect, sell them to Libyan farmers. It's obviously not something that can be quantified but I would say on the basis of what I read, and I read pretty much everything that comes out about trafficking-- and I have as a colleague, Jerome Tubiana, who's perhaps the greatest expert in-- I'm sure the greatest expert in the world on child trafficking in the Sahel, Libya, Darfur, Sudan as a whole. But it's, again, very, very difficult to quantify. If a child leaves Sudan, trying to get to Europe, has to go Libya to get to Europe, how do we know the fate of that child? A 16-year-old boy says, "This is not for me. I'm going to go to Europe. Maybe there's something in Calais. I hear about this place, Calais." And maybe we never hear from him again. Maybe his family never hears from him again. In asylum cases that I've worked, asylum applicants talking about being trafficked to Libyan farmers where they spend a year or two years before they're released or escaped. Slavery, of course, is the ultimate form of trafficking. And cattle slavery existed in Sudan right up to the end of the North-South Civil War. My guess is that there are many household slaves still, either in Khartoum or in Saudi Arabia or the UAE, which had no compunction about African Muslims as long as they're Muslim. The thing about the slave-taking, particularly in the Bahr el Ghazal region of South Sudan, is these are overwhelmingly Christian. So they could be forcibly converted, I'm sure. But slavery was a huge, huge problem and goes back centuries. Slavery in the Arab world is much older than slavery in the Western Hemisphere. Goes back many centuries. And it was institutionalised. There were slave traders who would go down on a special train through Babanussa to Bahr el Ghazal, get as many slaves as they could gather onto the train and go back to Khartoum, where they would be sold. That's [the context], I think, for understanding the attitude towards trafficking in children. It's not as bad as slavery. Well, in fact, it is, but it's called child trafficking now. If a girl is sold to a man or group of men who intend to use her only for sexual purposes, no matter how long it is, she's sexually enslaved.

Asylos: Thank you, moving on to the next section: children living and/or working on the streets. Are there reports of children living and/or working on the streets being harassed, ill-treated, and/or arrested by police or other state agents, and on the treatment they receive upon and after arrest?

Eric Reeves: This is a notorious phenomenon. It's been going on for years. Now, what I see in constant reports from Khartoum on Sudanese news bulletins, news reports, human rights reports, is that the RSF is abusing children, harassing children, raping children on the streets of Khartoum. They're not arrested because they don't really have what we would call a police force, but they're violently seized and held as well as being just harassed. I saw a video not so long ago of a group of young children, maybe 10 to 12. They walked by some Rapid Support Force troops who were sitting in chairs outside a building. When the children passed, they just got up and shot them. And it was filmed. That gives you a sense of the sense of impunity that the RSF has in dealing with children and how brutally violent they can be in their treatment.

Asylos: Thank you, moving on to refugee children and internally displaced people. How many children have fled their country with their family into Sudan?

Eric Reeves: There is a number. It's in one of those UN brief reports. I can't bring it to mind now. It would be people from Chad returning or finding life easier in Darfur than in Chad, which is almost impossible to believe, would be refugees from [the] Central African Republic, which is a failed state. Nobody from Libya or Egypt or Eritrea or Ethiopia would be coming in. Some from South Sudan might be fleeing the war there. But I don't believe it's a very large number, but I can't be certain.

Asylos: Well, you've answered the next question, which country have they fled? So thank you. Where do refugee children live?

Eric Reeves: Well, the two primary (Sources of refugees would be South Sudan and Eastern Chad. And so they will have fled to West Darfur, maybe further inland, but there's no real reason to go further east. There are now cross-border humanitarian convoys, small, but reaching parts of West Darfur. So if you were a Chadian facing-- say a Zaghawa facing a threat by the Rapid Support Forces, you might want to flee to West Darfur, where there are now some signs that humanitarian assistance will come across that Chad-Darfur border. There has been a wall for humanitarian agencies since the beginning of the genocide in 2003. It's starting to come down. There's immense pressure on President Déby to allow this he's being whip side. He's also facing a lot of pressure from the United Arab Emirates, which supports the Rapid Support Forces vigorously. And they built a so-called hospital in the northeastern corner of Chad, which is really a supply base for the RSF. But they're providing money that props up the Deby government. So N'Djamena is a long way from Adré on the Chad-Darfur border. But my guess is that's where most Chadian refugees would go. From South Sudan, I don't know. It's too hard to tell. It could be too many possibilities. And there's no census.

Asylos: Thank you. Final question from me is, are there any shelters for them? Are there any organisations involved in the protection of children living and/or working on the streets?

Eric Reeves: There are no organisations which would dare be on the streets in Khartoum. And there are none that have dared to return to Darfur. The extent of the RSF violence, now extending to Wad Madani, is such that I don't think we're going to see any large humanitarian organisation presence. And it's not going to be either the RSF or the SAF that provides any help in reunification. Shelters were provided to a very limited extent prior to the fighting that began in April 2023. But there were a tremendous number of homeless children on the streets of Khartoum just scratching out a living. There were obviously no shelters nearly comparable to the need. So I would say effectively negligible assistance.

Asylos: Thank you. We are now in the final section, and we have four more questions to go. So the first question you previously touched on, which was family reunification. The next question is, is family tracing available for unaccompanied children who left Sudan and wish to return?

Eric Reeves: It might be in some cases, but in the overwhelming majority of cases, there would be no resources for reuniting children with families.

Asylos: And following on from that particular question, is family reunification possible, how is the prospect of family reunification assessed and by whom and in terms of whether this is for the best interest of the child?

Eric Reeves: It does not exist. If children are reunited, it's because there has been a-- WhatsApp groups have provided information. Families join a WhatsApp group when they figure out where their child is and there's a possible reunification. There may be immigration to the child. held. But in the chaos that now exists, I don't think we can say that there really are any resources, counselling services, mediation services. There's only word of mouth, word of internet. And again, I mentioned earlier that ominously, the internet this morning was down throughout Sudan along with telecommunications, Zain in particular was down. And if it is the case that the Rapid Support Forces with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates have created their own internet service maybe using Starlink, they can afford to shut down communications, both telephonic and web-based communications because they won't use it. And they know that if the Sudan Armed Forces can't use it, they're blind in some important sense to what's going on. And atrocity crimes can't be reported because those who would report atrocity crimes are the ones most likely to be dependent upon web services or WhatsApp or other communications. We've been fortunate in Zamzam. I had to buy a generator so they could continue to charge their cell phones.

But one of the coordinating counsellors for the project got a European SIM card. So she was able to use that in her phone, and that's how we've been communicating. But I'm now extremely worried about how we will communicate if the

communications are as compromised as they seem to be, and the information you're getting now from me won't get any better as it goes on.

Asylos: Thank you, the final question, you've touched on a few different times, but in case you want to add to: Are there reports on returned children who have no access to school or drop out of school because of problems with language? So absence or absence of appropriate documentation.

Eric Reeves: Let me go through that step-by-step. Most of the children who return were going to school previously, at least if we go back to 2003. Somehow, the educational system didn't fall apart completely. It has now. Dropouts, well, that's been the definition of education in Darfur, how long do you go before you drop out? Hemedti only got to third grade. One of the big problems in Chad for Darfur refugees is that the Déby government is trying to impose a Chadian curriculum on Darfuri children. Well, the Darfuri curriculum is based on Arabic, and in Chad, it's based on French. So it's been extremely difficult for this transition to be effected, and they may actually have given up on it. And with such a huge new influx of refugees, I think all the priority is given to food, medicine, and water. Children returning, I don't believe, is a big number. Why would you come back to Sudan unless to be reunited with your family? How would you contact your family? How would you have gotten out in the first place? You ask all those questions. It's difficult to believe that there are many returnees. And the access to school has always been problematic for people in the marginalised regions. Many places have no schools. Many places have only ramshackle school buildings, untrained teachers. Education, and that's why Darfuris go to Khartoum. Education has always been focused on Khartoum. There are schools, and some good ones, and universities in El Fasher and Nyala. But these are the exceptions, and they're obviously distinctly urban. Well, they're very big cities, the two largest cities in Darfur. But as long as no supplies, no humanitarian supplies are coming in, no humanitarian personnel are coming in, whatever was there can't be reconstituted. We've now rehabilitated seven wells. People are going to die. More people I predict will die from drinking dirty water than from starvation. So we've been as busy as we can afford to be drilling new wells. And they were left in terrible shape by the NGOs that were supposed to manage them, but left and did not leave in place people who could maintain them. So now Gaffar, my colleague, tells me maybe 95% are not operating. We've picked the seven that are best distributed, that are most productive, and we've been able to help thousands of people. But we need a full-scale resurgence of hydrologists, maintenance people, [and] water sanitation specialists. And that's just not happening. And insofar as education or social sexual counseling for victims of rape, they're not even on the list. We're losing an entire generation of Darfuri children. And again, I know Darfur best, but I know that's true in many other regions as well. The Kordofans are right next door, and they're also very badly served.

Asylos: Thank you so that concludes the actual interview questions. Is there anything that you would like to add that we haven't discussed?

Eric Reeves: I think it's important that when talking about children, we're talking about society as a whole. Children reflect what a society is. And right now, we are seeing that society and the state in Sudan are disintegrating. That disintegration will be reflected in the futures with the children who survive. It will also be the case that if Sudan is a failed state it will become a breeding ground for terrorism. Here we have a vast country. Before South Sudan seceded, it was the largest country in Africa. It borders seven countries. If you want to talk about fertile ground for terrorism, let Sudan become a failed state. And yet the world seems vaguely aware of this possibility but is not doing nearly enough to stop it. In fact, it's the international community that has legitimised Hemedti and al-Burhan as the key interlocutors in any peace agreement or provision of security for humanitarian aid. This is a formula for disaster. These men are both chronic, vicious liars. They will never abide by any agreement. They may eventually commit to signing. Hemedti, in particular, is a pathological liar. It's just incredible that he has become, if not the most powerful, the second most powerful man in Sudan and certainly the richest. If the RSF takes over, again, let's remember, these are Darfurians, Chadians, Nigerians, Malians, people from [the] Central African Republic. They have no support whatsoever in the east of Sudan, in riverine Sudan, Southern Blue Nile, in the court offence. These are people who are regarded as alien, foreigners, barbarians. And they certainly proved much of that to be true. So again, children reflect what a society is. And insofar as we look at the children of Sudan, all we see is failure.

Interview with Ahmed Mustafa Elnour on 21 February 2024

Asylos: Let's start off with the first section, which is the Demographic Information, Statistical Data on Children in Sudan. Referencing the UNICEF state profiles data, which contain data about the number of children in individual states, in the draft report. Can you share any insights or observations on how the number of children in families tend to vary between urban and rural estate settings?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Regarding the differences between the children and population in urban and rural settings. Yes, I confirmed that one as the UNICEF report. It's not only that, but even it differs from one state to another state, like the tendency of the population in areas like Darfur and Kordofan is quite higher than other areas like eastern part of Sudan Kassala and Red Sea. This is also based on other additional UNICEF reports, which I can also share with you. UNICEF has a report that's been published in response to a child life situation in Sudan. It's called Sudan Child Notice¹. It's published in 2016. I will also share this report with you if you don't have it.

Asylos: Thank you. Moving on to the next section is the existence of ethnic, religious, linguistic minorities or indigenous groups. According to Minority Rights, World Dictionary of Minorities and Indigenous People, the following groups exist within the Sudan population: Nubians, South Sudanese, Beja, Copts, Dinka, Fur, and Nuba. How many children belong to these minorities and indigenous groups, to your knowledge?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I don't have the exact number for the number of minorities in Sudan, particularly for particular religious groups, mainly people or children [who] are from Christian families. But yes, those are the minorities in Sudan, particularly after the independence of South Sudan from Sudan, they became a minority in the country. So if you were talking about them, I don't have the exact figure. However, what I can do as well, I can link you with the Sudanese-Christian Association, which is responsible for the overall church in the country, or it's not an association, it's a council of [the] Sudanese Christian Council. I can provide you the link to them so that they have the data for this information.

Asylos: Okay. And the next question is there noticeable differences in the number of children among different ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Also, excuse me from that question because it's quite [a] difficult figure[...] to identify the numbers. But what can be helpful for you when you want to come with an estimate for this number, it depends on the states. So we will find the last Sudan consensus in 2008. And also, we have the mixed survey and the 3M survey conducted by UNICEF.² It gives an estimate for the number of children population in the country. And we can get from there an estimate. Mainly, in terms of language, it differs from state to state. However, in Darfur, when you come to central Darfur, they are majority speaking Darfuri. There are also small other groups in Northern Darfur like Zaghawa. And in West Africa, they have Masalit and Zaghawa. So you can come with this estimate, but there's no studies being conducted up to my knowledge being conducted in this area.

Asylos: Thank you. And then we move on to the next section, which is Basic Legal Information in Sudan. According to 28 Too Many, the FGM/C Research Initiative, the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) is the government authority that coordinates work in coordination with UNFPA and UNICEF, a joint program on female genital mutilation, which has been working in Sudan since 2008. Are you familiar with the National Council for Child Welfare in Sudan? And if so, could you share whether their mandate extends beyond addressing FGM and cover other children's issues? If they do, what areas do they focus on?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes. I'm familiar with the National Council of Child Welfare. It's a council being established by the president at that time, al-Bashir, and it's reported directly to the president. So it's not related to the Minister [Labour] and Social development. So it's on the ministerial level. So the mandate is mainly to issue policies and regulations in regard to the children's issues. And they are working in different areas, not only the FGM. They are the ones who are mandated to apply or to ensure the application of the Sudan Child Act 2010. And they're working in area[s] of child welfare, alternative care for the children, child labour, the child recruitment in armed conflict and armed groups. And also, they respond for the child in emergency. So the National Council of Child Welfare, at the end of the day, it's the last authority that's responsible for the overall children in Sudan. They are also the State Council. If you know the structures of Sudan, it's like the institutional laws of Sudan allow each state to have its own policy if they are in the frame of the entire laws in Sudan. For example, we have the Child Act in Sudan. So the Child Act, for instance, they are not specifying the age of marriage for a child, okay. So this is the overall law. However, in some states, this can be criminalised, like early marriage. One example I would give you is the FGM. FGM is being criminalised, for example, in South Kordofan, but it's not criminalised in other areas. But its practice being

¹ UNICEF, [Child Notice Sudan](#), 2016

² [Executive Summary: Simple Spatial Surveying Method \(S3M\) survey in Sudan](#). Data collection: June to July & November 2013

prohibited in terms of practising. For example, Khartoum, they are not prohibiting the FGM. But in South Kordofan, they are doing it by-law. So through the State Council of Child Welfare. So the National Council of Child Welfare, the NCCW, is a regulation body of child related Sudan and it has sub-bodies. At the state, they call it SCCW, State Council of Child Welfare.

Asylos: Thank you. And moving on to the next question. Can you identify any non-governmental organisations or civil society groups such as child rights coalitions that are active and relevant in the area of children's rights?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Is it international or national one?

Asylos: Both, International NGOs, and local NGOs.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Okay. We have international NGOs in Sudan, many of them. Even they cannot be counted. We have Save the Children, Plan International, NRC, and many other NGOs working in Children and UNICEF as well. So they are working in Sudan but are also other national NGOs. We have what would they call it? I can't recall them now, but there is a list of NGOs. What can be helpful is they are reaching the UNICEF because they have the child Protection Cluster. So the child protection cluster has a list of all active Partners, national and international, working in child protection area in Sudan

Asylos: Thank you. Moving on to the next question. In the light of the interim Sudanese Constitution's guarantee that children born to Sudanese parents have an inalienable right to nationality and citizenship, could you share whether this right is fully respected and implemented, especially in relation to Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes. This has been implemented so far. From my experience, there is no issue on that one. However, it becomes quite difficult because of displacement, many families lost their original papers in the area affected by conflict like Darfur and Khartoum and that's why some people face challenges. One, in terms of issuing those documents and procedures. There is also an experience of, I wouldn't say denial, but [...]challenges. Some of those in— some of those they have political— are related to certain political parties in the country, also have certain political views, which face some difficulties in issuing their different papers, including birth certificates, passports for their children in terms of sense of revenge, but then later it's being facilitated. And we have experience of one of the most famous lawyers in Sudan who went to one of the embassies outside of Sudan to renew the papers for his daughter but is being faced with denial from the embassy itself. So there is individual cases which can be related to certain groups. They may face some difficulties. But in general, it can be issued. Again, what I would like to state that many people, particularly those who moved early-- I would recall my experience in Khartoum. I moved early displaced from Khartoum to Al Jazeera to Madani, and many of those who came with me faced challenges to get their papers back or to get their papers or issuing a new papers from what we call it the national registration bureau down in the country.

Asylos: Thank you. Okay. Now moving on to the next section, which is general principles. Under the general principles, we have nondiscrimination, including children of minorities and indigenous people. Could you provide information on whether children belonging to minorities and indigenous populations face discrimination by state authorities or other groups? And if so, what challenges do these children encounter?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Actually, I don't have information on that one, to be honest. Yeah [...], but you'll hear some information about some certain groups they cannot-- they might be denied of getting the papers, particularly those who are related to western parts of the country; Darfur, Kordofan.

Asylos: Thank you, And I don't know if you'll be able to answer the second one, but I will ask you, it's a follow-on question from that one, which is, "Can children of ethnic, religious, linguistic, or indigenous minorities be heard in any proceedings affecting them? If not, what obstacles do they face?"

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I cannot answer. I don't have information about that one. However, let me link you with the contacts of other entities working mainly in this area.

Asylos: Thank you. And moving on to the next set of questions, referring to the best interest of the child. Are the best interest of the child central in decision-making, which regards to the child and how? And is the child in any way involved in the decision-making process, and how does this apply in practice?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: The National Council of Child Welfare established what is called the Child Parliament³. It's one of the ways of helping children to participate in policies related to children in Sudan with the support of international NGOs like the Children Plan International and UNICEF as well, and then the umbrella of USAID support. So they're also mainly targeting the vulnerable children, for example, we have the children on Alternative Care Program like children who are born out of wedlock. So this kind of thing. But for me, it's not very effective because it's not represent a certain group in Sudan, for example, in Darfur. And if they have been even represented, it's not reflecting the— it doesn't have the means to help them be unopened and to be an effective participation in different processes. This is one part. The other part is particularly after war, things became quite difficult to seek for the best interest of the child. Because right now, for example, almost one year now and no access [to] education. And I would like to recall an experience with the Minister of Education when

the displaced children from Khartoum arrived [in] Madani and it's a personal experience at that place. We advocated with the Minister of Education to allow those children not to sit for the examination, [...] the state examination, which allowed them to go for the intermediary schools and/or intermediary schools. Unfortunately, not all the children [...] managed to sit for [the] exam. And even instead of-- for us, the best interest here is to cancel the exam because those children have just been displaced. They have no books. They've been for a while not accessing any classrooms. They've been traumatised. But still, some of them, they sit for exam, although it was free time for displaced people. However, they sit for exam and it [has] become a requirement. So this is not serving the best interest of the child.

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Asylos: Thank you. In the next section, Right to Life and Development. Do you know if the rate of teenage pregnancies is recorded and reported? If so, are you able to provide numbers?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I think the best person to respond to that question is SEMA Center because they have the reports for this information.

Asylos: Thank you, moving on to the next set of questions, under Family Structure. What are the most common family structures? i.e. nuclear, extended, single-family?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: In Sudan, it depends on the setting, like urban setting and rural setting. In the urban setting, usually the ordinary family structure where it has the father who is living in the family and mother and the siblings. In rural settings, most of them also [have] the same structure, but also you would find the grandfather is also in the house. And even in some areas, they call it the junior, the senior, like the father. And because in those areas, most of those areas depend on agriculture. And also, for example, in some areas, depending on mining. So the fathers might go away. So the responsible person will be the mothers and also the grandparents in the house in some of the areas. Yeah. So what I'm trying to highlight here or to stress here is [that] the extended family [has] more influence when you go to the rural area than in urban areas.

Asylos: Thank you. Do you know how many children live in each type of family structure? And if you know if there's any differences between the family structures in different regions, you've just mentioned that in the urban area, it's more of a nuclear family, do you know how many children are living in each of those structures?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: The average number of the family in Sudan is based on [the] mixed survey. It's Mixed Survey 2014. If I could report, it's five to six. This is [the] extended family. [...] This will increase when you go to the rural areas. Yeah. But my reference point here will be the Mixed Survey MICS 2014 for Sudan⁴. It gives the detailed information based on if you find it [...] 2014 Sudan, it gives the information based on the state.

Asylos: Thank you. And then the next set of questions are on political developments so government structure, recent elections, possible political conflicts. What is the current governmental structure and how does it affect children in policies and law?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: So in Sudan, [...] we have 18 states. Each state would have a governor and each governor or each state has its own ministerial council or cabinet. So it [is] always [...] different like [the] Ministry of Education, [and the] Minister of Health. In all the states in Sudan, the Ministry of Health and Social Development, they are in one ministry. So except for two states, Khartoum and Al Jazirah [...]. Each ministry is independent of the other. So then when it comes to child protection and child warfare, we have [the] Minister of Social Development that's responsible for the day-to-day work of child-related issues like supporting families, families with children with disabilities. This is one of the things [the] State Council of Child Welfare works on it in terms of policy development. So when it comes to children, the State Council of Child Welfare, they are the ones who are responsible for the policy development and policy work at each state. Then there is quite a mix between the two entities or two governmental institutions, the State Council of Child Welfare and the Ministry of Social Development. And sometimes they are interfering in each other's work. Sometimes it causes [a] kind of conflict. But anyway, the State Council of Child Welfare, they are responsible for children for all children issues when it comes to children. At the state level, I'm sorry, I have to highlight that because it's very important [...]. At the state level, the State Council of Child Welfare, and let me confirm that one later on. If you highlight that one for me. The counsellor of the state

³ UNICEF, [Kids take over in Sudan](#), 17 December 2017

⁴ Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan. 2016, [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 of Sudan](#), Final Report. Khartoum, Sudan: UNICEF and Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), February 2016.

reports to the Ministry of Social Development and they are always-- in all the states that I went to, they are sharing the same boundaries. So yeah, this has improved how it works. Again, one of the critical issues is the application. There might be a good policy. We have one of the good acts of childhood in the [...] Eastern African region. However, when it comes to the practice, there is a big issue because-- lack of funding, lack of expertise in general. So this is one of the critical gaps when it comes to [...] the day-to-day practice of the work

Asylos: Thank you. And in regards to the current situation of the war itself, how is that affecting the government structure?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: When it comes to the war, the war [has] affected that in terms of the day-to-day work. For instance, now 11 months of the war and all ministries in Sudan, they received only a two-month salary. In some states, they received a four-month salary. So this is making it difficult [for] the staff to come on a daily basis to respond to the issues of the work. Another issue also is the capacity of the staff at the state level. Khartoum State was always the capital, was always the centre, and all the qualified staff, they're usually in Khartoum, unlike other states. And there is this capacity program. And that's why when Khartoum fell down, the people are telling me that they could not manage to respond or their capacity could not absorb such large-scale displacement in different states. It's one thing. And also the resources as well for the delivery of the work. The second thing is also the-- in some states, I will recall it. And this is based on my personal experience. In states like Darfur, the people in the different ministries, they got the capacity building through different support from different international agencies.

And this is in term[s] of capacity building and also financial [resources are] also being allocated to some of these states to support children. However, when it comes to other states that are not impacted by conflict, but being recently influenced indirectly by a huge number of IDPs, it become[s] a critical issue for them to respond because they have not been experiencing such large-scale conflict. And also, they have no experience in responding to emergencies. I faced this one in different states that I work with outside of the conflict.

Asylos: Thank you. And then a follow-up question from earlier, which is family environment and alternative care in Sudan. When it comes to the implementation of certain policies, is there a support system in place for families who are excluded from the family environment and alternative care?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: The system itself exists, but it's not operating. I've been working in this alternative care program for more than five years. And the system is very fragile. Mainly when it comes to who goes to the alternative care programs, they are children who are born out of wedlock. They called them here in Sudan, children of sin. So they are socially stigmatised. So those children, they usually go to the orphanage, government orphanage. They call them Mygoma. And then some families came to adopt some of the children mainly because it's Sudanese culture, but influenced by Islamic culture, mainly they adopt female[s]. And that's why when it comes to orphanage[s] you will find a bigger number of males or boys to be adopted. Those [are] often being adopted by the Alternative Care Program supported by different organisations, like for example, SOS Children's Villages. They are pioneering that in Sudan. They also [have a] national program called the Alternate Family Programs, [in] which they support families with this financial stipend to allow [them] to allow [the adoption of] some children for a short period of time. It's between three months or up to one year to three years. However, [...] they call it the 'Emergency Families'. So for instance, one family, no matter if I want to adopt the child, they will not give them directly from the government or they go through-- they adopt from the emergency families. But unfortunately, the Emergency Families become a permanent family or a senior permanent family because the economic situation in Sudan will start deteriorating and families cannot adopt a child. And you see those dynamics. So the number of adoptions decreased significantly over the last period. And that's why those Emergency Families become semi-permanent, this one problem. And it becomes quite difficult to increase the number of Emergency Families. Like now, children in the orphanage, there [are] no alternative families to adopt them. And definitely, war came and everything collapsed, like the adoption system totally paralysed now. I would like to recall something from the previous question. I remember through this adoption. One of the issues is that responding to children [is] most of the response now or 99 or 97 of the percent of the response. They are for families who arrive at what we call them 'gathering sites'. And often or usually, those gathering sites would be schools because they're only safe on big sites that accommodate like a big number of families, not a huge, big number of families. However, there are a significant number of families. It could be two or three times those who are in [the] gathering site, they are living with their relatives within the towns. Those are not safe at all. And it's one of the issues, that the government system cannot trace families who are living with their groups or with their relatives in neighbourhoods or living within the host community. And those being denied any kind of support. This is one of the critical issues that most of us are facing, and we don't know how to proceed or how to figure it out.

Asylos: Which state or ministry is responsible for the overarching child protection system and services? Would that be NCCW, or is there another ministry besides social development?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes, the Ministry of [Labour] and Social Development. They call it like this because in most of the things they're there. But yes, they were all responsible in terms of, as I mentioned, the policies is NCCW. In terms of the

NCCW is not going to have a cash program for supporting families. This will be implemented by the [Ministry of Labour] and Social Development. However, WHO said that as a part of our policy and regulation that we're supposed to have cash development programs. This is the State Council of Child Welfare or National Council of Child Welfare.

Asylos: Okay. So if I understood, the policy side is by NCCW, and budget comes from the Ministry of Health and Social Development?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes, Ministry of Health and Social Development. But unfortunately, when it comes at the state level, I say that there is—because there is a kind of competition between the two parts: between the SCCW and the Ministry of [Labour] and Social Development. They kind of compete [for a] limited budget. For me, if I want to work in the area.

Asylos: To clarify you were saying they are competing for the work itself or the budget?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Because most of the budget comes from international organisations. And that's why we find this kind of like—when it comes to the work, you have to coordinate with both of them to avoid any duplication.

Asylos: Okay. Thank you. And is the child protection system organised centrally, nationally or is it decentralised, so regional and state, or at community level?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I don't know if you are talking about the system. It's quite difficult for me to answer at this point for now. However, because I'm from outside part, but when it comes to working in child protection issues in general, there is a national cluster for child protection. And we should differentiate between the cluster and sector. The sector should be done by the government, which I don't see now. We have the cluster, which is [the] responsibility of the humanitarian team led by UNICEF. So UNICEF is responsible for the child protection cluster, and then with support of other organisations. And we have the child protection cluster at the state level and at the national level. So at the state level, in Kassala state, we meet monthly. But for example, in terms of [a] crisis like now, we meet bi-weekly.

Asylos: Thank you.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: And they discussed different issues on child protection, the support that's available, the work of the organisations, who is working where and when and how, like, and support. And then this will be with the presence of the state council of child welfare.

Asylos: Okay. And then another question on the alternative care. Does a national policy exist on the provision of alternative care for children in line with international standards?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes, we have. How I could put it. There is alternative care guidelines, okay. This has been updated recently, but it did not come out. There is other guidelines on how to run alternative care facilities or at least how to work directly. There is a guideline for overall policy purposes, regulations, and there is small regulation on how to run facilities. The guidelines in general, they are in line with UN authentication guidelines in terms of childcare. However, when it comes to practice, it's quite difficult to do it because, as I mentioned earlier, that 90% of the children in alternative care, they are children who are born out of wedlock. And as I mentioned, the issue of emergency families and quite difficult to sustain the intervention. This is one thing. But however, there [are] other children who are on the move from being separated. Also, this is part of the work of the State Council or National Council of Child Welfare, and they are working on that one. And let me give them a thumb here because they are doing good on that one. However, mainly for those in Sudan, they work and they support the unification under the support of the UNICEF. [...] But it's still like—when it comes to alternative care program, when you ask a Sudanese about alternative care program, on the back of their head, they always think of children who born out of wedlock. Yeah. Not children on the move.

Asylos: And then I have questions that are a little bit more regarding the application and implementation. So are there any regional or rural/urban differences and how many social workers are there?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Okay. Well, what I'm going to say here is related to my experience in a certain part of the country, which differs significantly. I worked in South Kordofan and I worked in Khartoum in the Alternative Care Program. Okay. When it comes to South Kordofan, there is no need for alternative care program to support certain children. There is a need for an alternative program, but there is no need for orphanages. Our social centres because most of the children are being adopted within the families. So the community-based structures can absorb and accept children, okay, within the families. And that's why you will find some families who might host children. Even if it's not their relatives, [they are] from the same ethnicity. They adopt him for a while until being unified. So it could be easier for rural cities to adopt some children. However, in Khartoum, this is not the case in an urban setting. Even for an instance, the acceptance of— I'm sorry for coming back for those children, of course. Although we're talking about war but when it comes to children born out of wedlock, in some areas of Sudan, particularly in Kordofan and Darfur, they called them the son or the daughter of—In Arabic, [...], they call it Wad Arrida (وادي). That means a child who is accepted by the community, being accepted by the family because the mother and the father of that child was willing to have that child, somehow. However, in Khartoum, or in other parts of the country that more to the northern part, like River Nile [...], they call them the child of the sin [...]. And that's why they won't accept it. So it differs how [the] community looks at the child and the acceptance for the child. Yeah.

So the social stigma associated with a child. [...] In terms of the [number] of social workers, the number, again, there is no statistic of the number of the social workers. At the state level, I cannot come up with the right figure. However, based on the structure of the— and getting me back to the structure, usually, we have the federal government, SCCW, then we have the state, state level, SCCW at the state level, then we have administrative units. So in each administrative unit, there is all locality level then administrative unit. And in each locality and administrative unit, there are a number of between 5 to 10 social workers who can reach but the issue is not about how many numbers only but also about different activities that are being used by social workers to reach vulnerable population [...] find a locality or administration unit that they don't even have a vehicle to go and work with a certain child or whether they don't have the budget to facilitate the transportation and the need, particularly for those away from the centre. The day-to-day issues that have been faced by social workers but there is a structure of the social workers at state level and at the current level and administrative unit level.

Asylos: And how are social services financed?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Social service financed mainly by the Ministry of Finance. They have this annual budgeting. So it's been done there. I think if you go for the last published financial reports, [...] the last financial report was in 2020, and the percentage is less than 2% for social development. In general, when you say social development, you're talking about poverty reduction, youth support through the Ministry of Social Development. We also have what is called the Graduation Employment Program. [...]. However, the organisations also give general support for the ministries. And [...], they mainly rely on the support of the international organisation. Okay, there's one thing. In 2021, the transition government, [...] 2021, issued— launched a program called Samarat. [...] for me, it was a good program supporting different families in the country through the Ministry of [Labour] and Social Development. However, this program couldn't continue because [of] the coup that happened in October 2021. And then the donors stopped the funding or stopped the support for the program. And unfortunately, since that time, the program [has] been suspended. It tried to be supported by— be relaunched through international NGOs, but I think the donors were reluctant to support. And now the program does not exist anymore.

Asylos: Are there any children's hotlines or other services so that they can report any abuse?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: There was two hotlines, one for the- what did we call it?- Child and Family Unit, which are kind of police program or-- they don't call it-- we cannot call it police, but the responsible for that one is the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

Asylos: So by the state?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yeah, by the state, and it worked very well. One of the good programs in the country. However, this one stopped since the war. There are no any hotline working. And there is also another hotline. Also was a part of the National Council of Child Welfare, but it's not been reactivated again since the war.

Asylos: So both are inactivated?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: They are not working definitely but for the National Council of Child Welfare, it's even earlier than this since it's been stopped.

Asylos: Sorry, it was before the war you mean?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yeah.

Asylos: Do you know the reason why it stopped?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I think lack of resources. They were also waiting for some support from UNICEF to support that program. Yeah.

Asylos: Thank you. And then how are family homes, shelters, and other forms of alternative care financed? Is that public or private?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Mainly, it depends on the public. But also, there is a significant part of support from the private sector. For example, we have the orphanages, government orphanages. We called it Mygoma. So it's well known the support [is] mainly through [the] Ministry of Finance to them— in terms of service, in terms of the operation cost. However, when it comes to-- when it comes to the number of the children because it increases day by day, so they usually have the support from the individuals who come to orphanages and give in-kind support and sometimes financial support.

I would recall my experience in 2020. Yes, one day [there] was an emergency, a significant number of children died in [an] orphanage. I think if I could remember the number, 47 children died due to outbreak. So most of them, they are under the age of one year. So here some organisation interfered to help. And I remember that MSF was the one who entered the orphanage and supported the orphanage. And then, yeah, they mainly depend on the support of the international organisations and individual support. It's important to highlight here when it comes to the health [of] orphanages because most organisations, they don't support the orphanages based on the alternative international or UN and alternative care guidelines. And that's why they face some challenges. And they usually go to the individual support. However, during the emergency, those orphanages is being supported by-- for example, when it came to the evacuation, they relied on ICRC and MSF to evacuate children from other safe areas. And again, from Madani to Kassala and other safe areas through the

support of international organisations, which is supporting survival of the children. But this is the issue where they cannot support the program for quite a long time due to its way of care or settings, which is not in line with [and] is not preferred by international NGOs.

Asylos: Are children placed in institutions only when necessary and suitable following appropriate procedures?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: As I mentioned earlier, the application of necessity is quite difficult here. But who necessitates a program? There are children whose mothers and fathers or their families cannot be traced. And usually, those children, for example, we find them on the streets, but in some areas, we collect them and bring them to the alternative care program or the orphanage. However, as I mentioned earlier, most of those children are children who are born out of wedlock, or, in areas, we call them being children of sin, based on the committee perception to them. And that's why many mothers, when they deliver, they just try to hide that one with the child in the street. Then someone takes that child, open a Police case at [the] Child family unit, then the child will be placed in orphanage, government orphanage or institutional care centre. This is the usual practice. There are some families or some mothers who bring the children themselves to the orphanage centres. And in that one, there is a police staying, sitting in that centre. They open a Police case. Usually, the social workers will try to do their best, discussing with them not to put their children within the orphanages. But this is, to be honest with you, it's based on individual skills of the social workers. It's not like-- they do their best to do so. But often, mothers will refuse to hold the child or care of the child because of social stigma. And then they will leave them at the orphanage centres. In that one, I guess I would like to give you some information to understand it as well. The case would be open against the mother because it's against the Sudanese law, adultery. Okay, the child of adultery as a government law. So if the mother wants to care for the child, then they have to pass the criminal law so that the child would have papers with their names. Otherwise, the case would be open. It would be in the centre. When a family wants to adopt a child, they can go. And the day that they adopt the child, the Police case will be closed. So you see. So yeah, it's not complicated. It's clear. However, there is [an] engagement of a Police case with the general family unit that's supposed to be done to enable child in the future to have papers and names and yeah.

Asylos: Okay. And can I follow up on that question? In terms of illegitimate children, do they have access to documents?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes. They give them the access. All of them, they have the same access to the paperwork. **Asylos:** So they can obtain birth certificates, for example.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: They can [obtain] birth certificates. They can obtain [an] ID number because this is one of the important documents. Then from the ID number, they can buy her passport or personal ID and other things. However, if you allow me to explain here, for example, if you are a family, you can adopt a child, they will give him or her the name [...] of the family. For example, we rely on the fourth name as well. So I am Ahmad Mustafa Elnour Ahmed, this is my name. Let's say the name of the new child is Mustafa. He's going to be Mustafa Ahmed Mustafa, but they will not give him Elnour. They will give him another name. So like Elnour Salah, for example, or Khalil. So the third name so that because for religious reason, so the child will not be entitled for the same rights as my own children.

Asylos: I understand. Okay. Thank you. And I have another follow-up question. It's regarding surrogacy. Is surrogacy something that actually takes place in Sudan?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Surrogacy?

Asylos: A process in which a woman carries and delivers a child for a couple or individual. Do you know if it takes place in Sudan?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: No.

Asylos: Thank you. We can move on to the next question within the section of Children in Conflict with the Law. Is a specialised juvenile justice system in place?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yeah. Sudan, I think one of the-- it's famous that it has [a] juvenile justice program. We have the child court for the children. [...] But the issue is when it comes to the children, for example, who've been deployed or being put in the rehabilitation centres because we don't call them a prison. There is some issue there in terms of the capacity of delivering the support for the rehabilitation centres, those kind of things.

Asylos: Thank you, are children who've saved their sentence subject to discrimination in any way?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yeah. After they've done this service and they've been convicted and they're released, do they face any discrimination going back into society? Definitely. They face some challenges and difficulties, yeah.

Asylos: Could you explain a bit more on the kind of difficulties and challenges they face?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yeah. The community look at them-- institutionally, they are not-- they don't face such challenges because nobody would give them a kind of focus. However, in the community, they look at them as a criminal rather than being a child who will be rehabilitated.

Asylos: So they face stigma?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Stigma. It will follow them even when they go to marriage. And even, for example, Children who are born out of wedlock. Illegally born, yeah. They also feel the stigma of marriage and being associated with his community. And usually, they try to hide that this one when they go to work, when they go to apply for applications. Yeah. That affects everything.

Asylos: Thank you. Do you know if there are children in detention? And for what reason are these children separated from incarcerated adults? And are children accommodated in different gender accommodation?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I cannot answer this question specifically because it's been a while for me. It's been more than seven years since I've been in contact with juvenile children in contact with law. However, last year in August, and when I was in Al Jazirah state, MSF team called me to respond for some of the issues of the children. They were in rehabilitation centre in Khartoum, but been transferred here to Al Jazirah state. They were in a place called Al-Hasaheisa locality. Unfortunately, they were in jail there. In Al Jazirah, in Al-Hasaheisa in particular, because there is no place like rehabilitation centre for them to be sent to.

Asylos: So there was adults in that centre?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: No, Mainly children. They have different accommodations for males and females. However, I don't know what was being detained for. This is one of the issues also. When it comes to international organisations and national organisations, they do not give them a priority during this war. The whole focus would be in delivering assistance for those families within IDPs' gathering points. Unfortunately, we don't call them IDPs. I don't know if that is good or not good, but we call them "gathering sites" or "gathering areas" because of the government; they don't want to call them IDPs, but they are IDPs. Unfortunately, no support for those children. Only health support through [the] MSF team.

Asylos: And are specific groups of children overrepresented in the juvenile system? If so, why? That might be a question for Muhammad.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I'm not the right person. I will also give you a number for a child protection expert who works in juvenile.

Asylos: Thank you. And then we're moving on to the next section, which is on victims of child trafficking. In regards to identification, registration, and prevention. Are identified victims of child trafficking registered anyway?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Again, okay, for this one, let me share with you the contacts details of the manager of what is called EAMR Project. EAMR stands for "East African Migration Routes Project"

Asylos: Thank you. The next question relates to trafficking, is the sale of children taking place?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I'm not sure.

Asylos: Thank you. Are there any shelters for them or any organisations involved in protection of children living and working on the streets?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Yes. There is a famous organisation. I'm trying to recall them. Just a minute. Street children in Sudan. There is an organisation called Sabah it's Sudanese. They are mainly working with street children. This is the small biography for them. There are two persons we can contact in Sabah organisation.

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Okay. Let me search for Sabah contacts, this is the main organisation working in Sudan with street children.

Asylos: Thank you. Okay. And then we move on to the next section, second to last section, This one is on refugee children and Internally Displaced People. Which countries have they fled? So when they fled into Sudan, so for refugee children, where are they from? And then internally displaced people, it would be what states are they from?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Before or after the war?

Asylos: Before to get the full picture?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Before the war, for displaced children and their families, they prepared usually coming to Khartoum. [...] from Darfur, from Kordofan mainly to Khartoum, and Al Jazirah, as well. And there is a time when families tried to reintegrate the families with-- children with their families, they even come again to Khartoum with additional children. I could recall that. However, if you are like this offer displace people for refugees, I think the right person to answer this question is the manager of the EAMR project. She's more familiar with the situation.

Asylos: Thank you. Okay. Then in that case, we can move on to the last section. This section is now returning separated or unaccompanied children, which basically is about family reunification of unaccompanied and separated children to Sudan. Is family tracing available for unaccompanied children who have left Sudan and wish to return?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: I don't have an answer for that one.

Asylos: Okay. Thank you, and then there is a question that you touched on before, which was to do with education. Are there any reports on returned children who have no access to school or drop out of school because of problems with language or absence of appropriate documentation?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Okay. When it comes to education, there is no such report. Let me refer back to my records or some of the colleagues in education. They might have some information about that one. But generally, in terms of my experience, Sudan has an issue of it's one of the countries that will not allow you to use another curriculum except Sudanese curriculum. And this has become a dilemma for refugees who are coming from other parts of the country, from other countries, neighbouring countries to Sudan, particularly Ethiopia and South Sudan.

For example, because education is my area so when I was with the children in managing that education project in Tigray response in eastern parts of the country, we faced a problem of language and curriculum. So the government did not allow us to use curriculum other than the Sudanese curriculum.

And when it comes to the language, we use [the] English language. So we are allowed [...] no other language. Arabic is the main language. English is allowed on an exceptional basis for such a situation. However, no other language can be this. And children who came from Tigray, they studied Amharic. They studied Amharic and this was one of the dilemmas. The same with South Sudanese. Also, we face a problem in terms of curriculum. We mainly use this as curriculum in English. So this is my experience when it comes to and this is why many children drop out because [of] the language.

Asylos: What about absence of documentation? Is that also another issue that children could drop out of school?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Except maybe in [the] main town because usually, if it is being taught in camps, they have one understanding for the situation of the children, and they may support. However, in towns like main cities like, for example, El-Obeid and Khartoum, they might not experience such situations. So usually, the organisation works on those issues, those particular on an individual basis. And not because the system is not allowed in or don't have a documentation to study, but rather it's the awareness of the teachers and the awareness of schools. So those in the camp are well aware, but those in the cities are not well familiar with the situation of the children and allowing them to study.

And we work on that one on [an] individual basis. And usually, individual basis and the support of other organisations, we always support the facilitation of the communication. But also, it's good to highlight that when the child will need for [...] the documents to study, mainly during the first year, like grade one. With mobilisation or support, they can access the school. And during the last year, when they are last year of grades, last grade, when they are moving from [one] level to another level, like from basic school to intermediate school, they might face some challenges here. Yeah. This one, mainly, they require the documentation to be available for the child because they will stop going to high school.

In Sudan, we have three levels before university. We have primary school, which is six years now. It was eight years two years back, but now it's six years. A new level of education being brought is intermediate school. And then we have secondary school. So basically, the primary school, it's six-year, intermediate school three years, and secondary school three years, then they go to university. And they start with grade one at the age of six. So some of the children might not enter the school because of their age. So there's a primary school, yeah, if they are less than that.

Asylos: Thank you very much. This is the end of the interview questions. I would like to ask you, is there anything that you would like to add that we haven't touched on already?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Maybe about education is my area of concern. So when it comes to education, Sudan right now, almost one of the key issues is the denial for education right. So all the schools have been closed since April 23rd or mid-April, and now no education in the country. So with one of the critical cases the children, and that's why many families, they start moving out to enable children in accessing education. They move to Egypt, they move also to Uganda, become a [...] anywhere they go, yes, [...]. Another thing that also might face the children is the issue of child recruitment in armed groups, and this is one of those. No one is touching them now because now it's a war, and bringing such things is going to cause trouble. But it is going to be very serious very soon, where you see many children being involved in armed groups as child soldiers. Then, when it comes also to worst forms of child labour is also an issue in Sudan, particularly mining, in particular in South Kordofan and Darfur part where children have been involved in mine working in quite early age. And in some of the areas, like in South Kordofan, you find this impacted even access to education because a significant number of children being dropped out. Just because of Child labour and better pay. I think those are three areas which might support your research and your program.

Asylos: Thank you and in regards to labour, you said it was mainly in mining?

Ahmed Mustafa Elnour: Mainly to use mining and also maybe in agricultural fields. But this is for us become like a practice where the families send their child to work in [the] agriculture field or in rearing animals. But this is not as significant as mining because now they expose even to dangerous materials [...] impact even their future health.

Asylos: Thank you.

Written answers sent by Asma Taha 2 June 2024

Questions relating to refugees and IDPs and returnees to Sudan:**Asylos:** How many unaccompanied and separated refugee children are in Sudan and registered?**Asma Taha:** There is no accurate data on the numbers of unaccompanied and separated children in Sudan and especially after the conflict outbreak on 15th of April 2023. The numbers of UASC in the camp settings or settlement areas are available since there is a coordinated structure for providing child protection services by humanitarian actors including the identification of UASC, if we take the example in Gedarif states the numbers are available in the refugee camp in and in the IDP settlements, however if

we try to have an accurate number from the responsible government body which is the state Council for Child welfare they don't have an accurate number or able to coordinate the collection of data, and let me refer to a capacity building needs assessment done by one of the lead Child Protection International organizations (attached as reference , and not for share) in 2022 and is focused on the area of refugee and migrants children that highlights the gaps in the capacity of the government institutions to deal with child protection issues including UASC and this is the case for Gedarif state where a camp infrastructure is present and there is a high presence of both UN and International and local NGOs which is to a large extent a better case, but in the case of other states that didn't have humanitarian structure in place and are currently affected by the conflict or are receiving influx of the displaced populations it is almost impossible to have rough figures.

Asylos: Where do refugee children live?**Asma Taha:** Refugee children are scattered all over Sudan being one of the largest refugee hosting countries with more than 1M refugee, prior to the conflict the majority of refugees lived in Khartoum and Depends on their country of origin South Sudanese for example were mainly located on Khartoum and White Nile, Ethiopian and Eritrean Refugees and the refugees from the East and Horn of Africa were mainly located in Gedarif State, Kassala where the two states has camp infrastructure established decades ago and Khartoum while for the Refugees from Chad and Central Africa Republic they are mainly in the Darfur Region, mainly Western Darfur state and South Darfur state respectively. Kindly refer to [UNHCR Refugees and Asylum Seekers data hub](#) where is highlights the refugee population per state prior and post conflict. The post conflict reality shows that the refugees from South Sudan has moved from Khartoum and the conflict affected areas to the South Sudanese refugee camps in White Nile state (has borders with South Sudan) state while others has returned to South Sudan according to [IOM DTM](#) where 80% of the non-Sudanese nationals who crossed the border to South Sudan where South Sudanese nationals. For the case of Ethiopians, Eritreans, Congolese refugees and the refugees from the East and horn of Africa the majority fled Khartoum to the Eastern States mainly Kassala and Gedarif where the refugees from Syria and Yemen were reportedly fled Khartoum to Red Sea State (please refer to the needs assessment done after the conflict outbreak).**Asylos:** Do refugee children have access to education and health services?**Asma Taha:** Refugee children have access to both health and education, the main issue remains is the affordability of those services specially for the health services fees or schools materials. For those located in camps and gathering sites UN agencies and NGOs provide free services but for those who are out of those structures the affordability remains a big challenge.**Asylos:** Is the child protection system organised centrally (national) or is it decentralised (regional or at community level)?**Asma Taha:** The Child protection system is organized on the three levels, nationally the Child Protection Sub-Sector led by UNICEF with the National Council for Child Welfare being the main responsible government body for the child protection policy and while the Ministry of Social Development has the human resources of social/case works, psychologist, etc. The child protection Sub national level on state level exists where there is a humanitarian structure or response in place otherwise it doesn't while there is a state level council for child welfare but as it depends mainly on UNICEF and NGOs for funding and technical support it often struggles when there is no humanitarian structure in the state. on community level whenever there is child protection interventions exist a community base protection structures are established either through the NGOs itself or through the SCCW and MoSD. However, the system needs capacity building the lack of trained cadre and community based structures which are trained on child protection is a gap especially in the states where there is no humanitarian response in place.**Asylos:** Does a national policy exist on the provision of alternative care for children, in line with international standards?**Asma Taha:** I am not sure about the existence of a national policy on the provision of alternative care, the Child Act of 2010 does mention the establishment of care homes briefly (see [here](#) please).

Asylos: Are there any organisations involved in the protection of children living and/or working on the streets? Are there any shelters for them?

Asma Taha: There is an organization called SABAH (NNGO) are among others working with children on the streets, I am not sure about the existence of shelters for children working on the streets as I haven't encountered one through my working experience.

Asylos: For children who wish to return to Sudan, are counselling or mediation services available to assist children in re-establishing contact with their family? By whom?

Asma Taha: That will be hard to confirm, I don't know of such services exists at the moment especially with the current conflict expansion and both internal and cross border movement which will probably make the family tracing and reunifications challenging, as well as the movement of human resources needed for such activities as well as the lack of funding and resources.

Asylos: Are there children's hotlines or other services so that they can report any abuses? Is the hotline operated by an independent entity or a service provided by the State?

Asma Taha: There are two hotlines for social services that I am aware with, the one for reporting abuses led by the Family and Child Police Unit (FCPU) which was in cases reported that the service was not provided all the time, the other was led by the Combat Violence against Women (CVAW) mainly dealing with GBV and SGBV, both are government entities. However, I am not sure if both hotlines are functional post conflict.

Asylos: Are identified victims of child trafficking registered in Sudan?

Asma Taha: There is no accurate date on identified or registered trafficking victims in Sudan, the programs working on trafficked children were always challenged by the security forces. Kindly refer to a recent [report by GPG](#) on the impact of conflict on modern slavery and human trafficking in Sudan and the region which highlights the challenges related to the process.

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