

SOCIAL ASSESSMENT AND SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

**Sudan Emergency Crisis Response Safety
Net Project (SANAD-MCCT+) (P505963)**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Social Assessment and Social Risk Management Framework (SA-SRMF) has been prepared for the Sudan Emergency Crisis Response Safety Net Project (SANAD-MCCT+) to evaluate and address potential social impacts and risks throughout the project's implementation. Anchored in the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), this assessment ensures that SANAD's interventions remain inclusive, conflict-sensitive, and responsive to community dynamics, particularly in Sudan's ongoing crisis.

SANAD-MCCT+ is designed to protect pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) and their young children, who are especially vulnerable amid the economic and humanitarian crises. By providing cash transfers linked to essential health and nutrition services, the project seeks to mitigate immediate food insecurity while fostering long-term human capital gains in maternal and child health.

Sudan's conflict has triggered extensive displacement, disrupted social structures, and intensified poverty, compounding risks of exclusion and marginalisation for vulnerable groups. Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IPs/SSAHUTLCs), alongside internally displaced persons, women-headed households, and ethnic minorities, are at heightened risk of missing out on crucial resources. Social inequalities, high mobility, and limited state capacity further complicate the delivery of support mechanisms.

Building on UNICEF's pilot Mother and Child Cash Transfer Plus (MCCT+) initiatives, World Bank-supported SANAD applies multifaceted strategies combining emergency cash relief with targeted nutrition, health services, and social behaviour change interventions. This approach is grounded in active community engagement, working closely with local leaders, grassroots organisations, and youth networks to maintain trust and ownership. Concurrently, the project emphasises robust accountability mechanisms—such as transparent beneficiary selection criteria and a culturally accessible grievance redress system—to preserve equity and prevent social tensions.

The SA-SRMF aligns with the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), the SEA/SH Action Plan, Labour Management Procedures, and the Security Management Framework (SMF). The mitigation actions across all ESS instruments for SANAD synergistically reinforce gender equity and respect for cultural norms while minimising risks of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEA/SH). The framework highlights the need to periodically review and update actions based on consultations and emerging field data. UNICEF and its implementing partners commit to an adaptive approach prioritising the most vulnerable populations. This continuous revision will enhance the overall effectiveness of the project, foster trust within communities, and help preserve critical social outcomes amidst ongoing conflict and displacement.

As a desk-based assessment, the SA-SRMF will be enhanced through ongoing stakeholder consultations in project localities. Refinements will reflect up-to-date conditions and community insights, ensuring that SANAD-MCCT+ evolves effectively in response to Sudan's rapidly changing environment. Through this iterative process, the project aims to deliver meaningful, equitable, and conflict-sensitive support to Sudan's most vulnerable women and children while helping restore vital social protections across the country.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Social Assessment and Social Risk Management Framework (SA-SRMF) is an appraisal requirement for the Sudan Emergency Crisis Response Safety Net Project (SECRSNP), also known as SANAD-MCCT+, which is being implemented under the World Bank Policy for Investment Project Financing. The project aims to address the urgent needs for social security safety nets in Sudan, which have been worsened by ongoing conflict, food insecurity, and economic collapse. The SA-SRMF is included in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) and is aligned with the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), specifically ESS7 (Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities)

1.1 BACKGROUND

The ongoing conflict in Sudan has triggered a massive displacement crisis, affecting millions across the country. An estimated 11,532,774 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are currently scattered across 10,043 locations in 184 localities, covering all 18 states of Sudan. Since April 15, 2023, approximately 8,795,874 individuals have been newly displaced within Sudan, with over 52% of them being children under the age of 18. Moreover, 28% of pre-existing IDPs have faced secondary displacement due to the escalating conflict. Beyond Sudan's borders, an additional 3,352,418 individuals have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, highlighting the regional impact of this crisis.

The majority of displaced individuals originate from Khartoum (32%), South Darfur (18%), and North Darfur (14%), while the largest concentrations of IDPs are currently hosted in South Darfur (16%), North Darfur (14%), and Gedaref (10%). This widespread displacement has profoundly disrupted community structures and social dynamics, making it increasingly challenging to preserve traditional societal roles and functions.

Since May 2023, Sudan has faced cash shortages due to conflict, fiscal deficit monetisation, and mobile banking disruptions. In response, the Central Bank of Sudan (CBoS) introduced reforms to promote a cashless economy, phasing out 500 SDG and 1,000 SDG banknotes and replacing them with a new 1,000 SDG note in eight states. The government also imposed a 200,000 SDG withdrawal limit to control circulation, particularly in RSF-held areas. However, these measures worsened the crisis, disproportionately affecting cash-dependent vulnerable groups. Limited financial access, reduced banking capacity, and digital barriers further undermined the reforms.

The health and nutrition status of Sudan's population, particularly children under five and PLWs, is deeply concerning. Malnutrition remains widespread, with 16.3% of children affected by wasting and 38.3% experiencing stunting. The IPC analysis released in December 2024 projected that, between October 2024 and May 2025, nearly half of the population (24.6 million people) will likely face high levels of acute food insecurity. Among them, 8.1 million people are expected to be in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency), while at least 0.6 million are at risk of reaching IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe/Famine).

Despite the challenges of navigating rapidly shifting social fabrics, UNICEF has conducted social network analysis in accessible states to gain a deeper understanding of community relationships. This analysis focuses on identifying central nodes, gatekeepers, influencers, and well-connected community members who are critical sources of information and leadership in driving community-led actions. These efforts will be sustained under the SANAD MCCT+ project, offering essential insights into the evolving social landscape while supporting the identification of social risks and opportunities to strengthen response.

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Sudan Emergency Crisis Response Safety Net Project (SECRSNP), commonly referred to as SANAD (meaning "Support" in Arabic), is being implemented under the World Bank Policy for Investment Project Financing, specifically in accordance with paragraph 12 of Section III. The project aims to provide emergency safety net support to vulnerable and food-insecure populations. The project consists of following three main components, each implemented by a different agency, focusing on emergency food and cash transfers, as well as project management:

Component 1: Emergency Safety Net Transfers, to be implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP), aims to support vulnerable and food-insecure households in areas and localities classified as IPC4 and IPC3 and help them weather multiple shocks (displacement, food shortages, and high inflation) that may have long-term and persistent consequences in terms of nutrition outcomes, livelihood choices, and asset depletion.

Component 2: Human Capital-Sensitive Cash Transfers, to be implemented by UNICEF, will provide cash transfers to Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs). These transfers will be directly linked to essential health and nutrition services to improve maternal and child health outcomes. This component aims to contribute to long-term human capital development by enhancing the health and nutrition status of mothers and children during the first 1,000 days of life, a critical window for child development.

Component 3: Project Management covers the operational and administrative costs of implementing Components 1 and 2. This includes indirect support costs for WFP and UNICEF and all expenses related to the project's implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. This Project Implementation Manual (PIM) focuses explicitly on Component 2, which is being implemented by UNICEF. While aligned with Component 3 on project management, the PIM guides delivering human capital-sensitive cash transfers to PLWs. The objective of this component is to provide regular financial support to PLWs, ensuring that they also have access to health and nutrition services to protect maternal and child health during the critical early years of life, especially the first 1,000 days of life.

Furthermore, UNICEF's Mother and Child Cash Transfer Plus (MCCT+) programme pilot in Port Sudan and Atbara localities of Red Sea and River Nile States has successfully improved maternal and child health outcomes through direct cash transfers linked to essential health and nutrition services.

Building on this proven framework, the SANAD-MCCT+ programme seeks to expand and incorporate the new World Bank-funded components, ensuring continuity in the principles and systems used for programme delivery. This investment will foster sustained adoption of positive health behaviours and enhance access to nutrition, sanitation, and early childhood care. SANAD-MCCT+ will act as a pilot initiative, leveraging the MCCT+ approach to reach the most vulnerable populations and aligned with the Sudan Health Assistance Response to Emergencies-**SHARE** project.

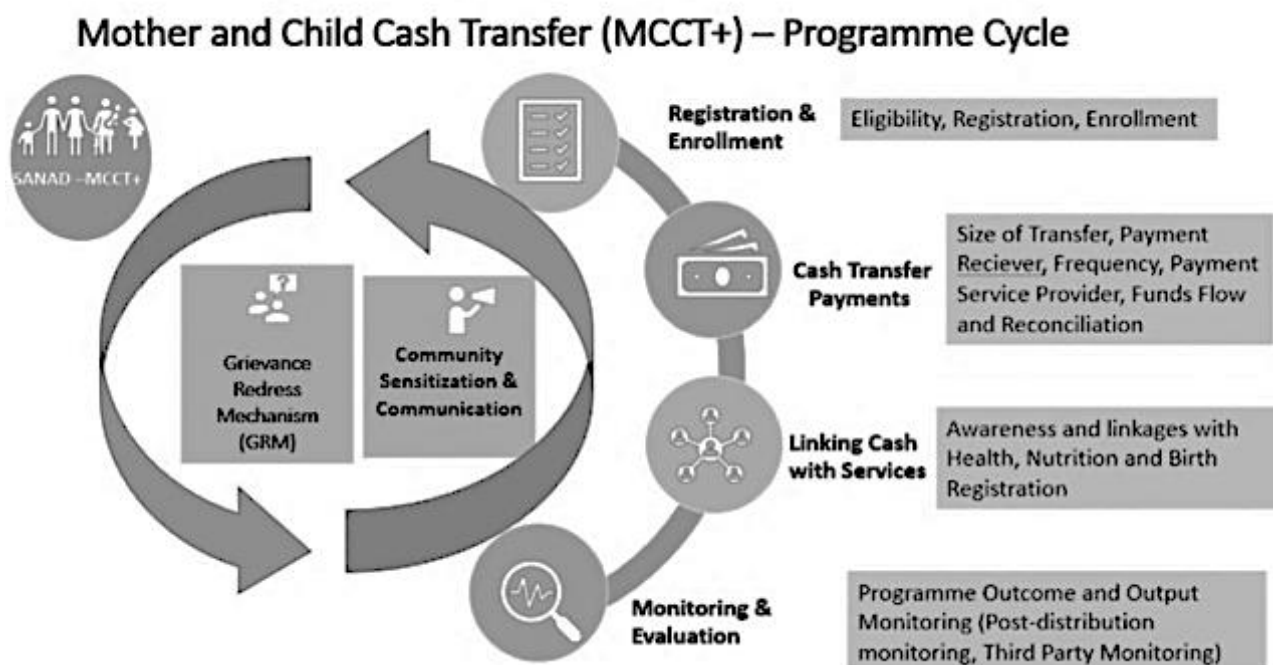


Figure 1: SANAD MCCT+ Programme Cycle

1.3 OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

In alignment with the Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) requirements for projects, a **Social Assessment and Social Risk Management Framework (SA-SRMF)** has been developed to systematically manage the social risks and impacts of the project throughout its lifecycle. Over the past three years, UNICEF has brought extensive expertise in designing and implementing Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM) instruments, particularly in emergency and Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) contexts. In response to the ongoing conflict, SANAD MCCT+ remains committed to supporting women and children from all population groups, including Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IPs/SSAHUTLCs), in the states where the programme will be implemented.

As stipulated under ESS1, the Social Assessment is proportionate to the scope, risks, and impacts of SANAD-MCCT+. The project has been assessed as a High Social Risk intervention due to its targeting of vulnerable populations (internally displaced persons, women-headed households, and marginalised ethnic groups), reliance on digital cash transfers, and exposure to potential socio-economic tensions. The identified risks, mitigation measures, and implementation strategies outlined in this SA-SRMF are critical to ensuring the success, equity, and sustainability of SANAD-MCCT+.

At the country level, UNICEF Sudan has the capacity to support and inform the implementation of the ESF. This includes systems and expertise in Social and Behavioural Change (SBC), Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Advocacy and Communication, Gender, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Planning and Monitoring, and Security Management, as well as expertise in Health, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection, WASH and Social Policy sectors.

The SA-SRMF provides a comprehensive analysis of Sudan’s social and community structures, with a focus on the states where the programme will be implemented. It offers a preliminary assessment of social risks, impacts, and mitigation strategies associated with the SANAD-MCCT+ project. The framework identifies the most vulnerable

groups affected by food insecurity, conflict, and economic instability and establishes mechanisms to ensure their equitable participation and protection within the project. Additionally, it incorporates a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to effectively address concerns and complaints from project-affected people (PAPs).

This desk review presents an overview of Sudan's social and community structures in the context of the ongoing crisis and project objectives. It provides an initial analysis of the social risks and impacts relevant to SANAD-MCCT+ and summarises existing qualitative studies and other relevant resources. The SA-SRMF, developed through this desk review, will be further strengthened by stakeholder engagement activities outlined in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) during project implementation.

The **objectives of this SA-SRMF** for SANAD MCCT+ is to assess and mitigate the potential social impact and risks of the proposed SANAD MCCT+ activities on PAP, with a particular focus on IP/SSAHUTLC and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, consistent with ESS7 standards of the World Bank.

The SA-SRMF is an opportunity for UNICEF to reinforce its commitment to ensure that gender transformative approaches and diversity, equity and inclusion principles and strategies are mainstreamed in the programme design and management of the project.

The socio-economic and cultural characteristics of vulnerable groups, especially IP/SSAHUTLC, internally displaced people (IDPs), ethnic minorities, and host communities, will inform the project and support larger efforts to promote social cohesion and build resilience among communities affected by the crisis in Sudan.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

UNICEF has conducted this desk review in line with ESS7 to ensure that SANAD development process and design fosters full respect for the human rights, dignity, aspirations, identity, culture, and natural resource-based livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities. This was done through a comprehensive desk review of secondary data, organisational reports, and relevant studies on Sudan's social context. The key sources of secondary data include:

- IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix reports – Providing insights into displacement trends and humanitarian needs.
- UNICEF Sudan documents and field reports – Offering contextual assessments and programmatic responses.
- Data from OCHA, UNHCR, and other humanitarian partners – Contributing to a broader understanding of humanitarian challenges and interventions.
- Scholarly articles and public web resources – Analysing Sudan's ethnic composition, conflict dynamics, and Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IP/SSAHUTLC) contexts.
- Sudanese government data (where accessible) – Offering official demographic, economic, and social statistics.
- Previous Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM) instruments – Informing risk mitigation and response strategies.
- Expert feedback from UNICEF and its implementing partners – Providing technical insights and validation of findings.

This desk review offers a concise overview of the social, economic, and demographic context for each of Sudan's 18 states, organised into five geographic regions: Northern, Southern, Western, Eastern, and Central. Under the SANAD Project, one locality in three states has been identified for implementation, with priority areas selected

based on vulnerability, service gaps, and population needs. The generic profiles based on the regions represent the chosen localities, capturing the diversity of Sudan's geographic, socio-economic, and cultural landscape.

They reflect the most common needs and vulnerabilities to support the design of inclusive and responsive SANAD Project interventions. Particular attention is given to underserved and vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), Indigenous Peoples, and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IP/SSAHULTC).

This SA-SRMF will be refined with site/locality-specific challenges as the project advances. Given the dynamic nature of the conflict context in Sudan, it is essential to rely on iterative consultations at the local level to validate and refine the social risk findings, particularly for Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (SSAHUTLCs) in each project locality. These future consultations will enable ongoing updates to the SA-SRMF, ensuring that site-specific social risks, stakeholder concerns, and corresponding mitigation measures remain accurate and comprehensive. Progress on these consultations will be monitored continuously and reported in project updates, ensuring that the measures outlined here remain living and adaptive throughout implementation.

Additional qualitative data will be collected during the project implementation phase to refine and supplement the assessment. This will include:

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) – Engaging with government officials, community leaders, and humanitarian actors.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – Gathering perspectives from affected populations, including displaced communities, women, and youth.

Stakeholder Consultations – Ensuring inclusive participation from relevant organizations and local authorities.

While this SA-SRMF emphasises non-exclusion and equitable treatment of IP/SSAHUTLCs, it will also expand to cover additional vulnerable groups identified through local social mapping in project intervention areas (e.g., persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, returnees, etc.). The project will contextualise group-specific actions and consultations to address their barriers. These actions—including culturally appropriate, multi-media outreach, and stakeholder engagements—will be documented as the SA-SRMF evolves, providing lessons learned for the future.

While every effort has been made to ensure the comprehensiveness of this SA-SRMF, certain limitations that must be acknowledged are:

Constrained access to primary data and reliable information sources due to the current crisis situation, resulting in challenges for on-ground data verification and direct field assessments.

Rapidly Evolving Security and Displacement Contexts necessitate frequent updates, making this SA-SRMF a living document subject to revisions as new data emerges.

Despite these constraints, the desk review brings a robust, evidence-based approach to assessing Sudan's social risks and vulnerabilities, guiding the effective response and mitigation strategies.

2. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

2.1 Legal and Institutional Framework

Sudan's legal, institutional, and policy framework partially supports recognising and protecting Indigenous Peoples (IP) and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Local Tribal Communities (SSAHULTC). The Interim National Constitution (2005) and Constitutional Declaration (2019) underscore cultural and linguistic diversity, reflecting Sudan's multi-ethnic character; however, they do not define "Indigenous peoples."

State-centric laws, such as the Unregistered Land Act (1970), continue to grant the government sweeping authority over unregistered land, leaving communal land rights in a precarious position. While the transitional environment once showed promise for legal reforms, the prolonged conflict has stalled legislative processes, halting efforts to ensure customary rights as advised in ESS7 paragraphs 29–30.

Despite earlier progress through peace agreements—such as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA, 2005), the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (2011), and the Juba Peace Agreement (2020)—the specialised commissions established to handle communal land disputes and restitution now function sporadically or are severely constrained by the current security situation.

Sudan is party to major human rights instruments, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. However, it has not ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, which would explicitly recognise and protect Indigenous and tribal groups. Even so, ESS7's requirements remain applicable whenever communities display the four defining characteristics, regardless of Sudan's treaty ratifications. Meeting these requirements is compounded by the current crisis, as violence and displacement hinder social assessments, meaningful consultations, and community engagement critical to ESS7 compliance.

Sudan's frameworks exhibit significant gaps, particularly in formally recognising customary land tenure and upholding the obligation to obtain Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

ESS7 seeks to ensure that IP/SSAHULTC and other marginalised communities benefit from development initiatives, receive culturally attuned protections, are consulted meaningfully, and fully participate in project planning and execution. Achieving these outcomes is increasingly difficult amid ongoing violence and institutional breakdowns.

The SANAD Project components recognise the complex and evolving socio-economic landscape shaped by ongoing conflict. Flexible, context-responsive approaches that actively engage local authorities, community leaders, and partner organisations will be adopted to tailor interventions to the specific needs of each locality. Community-level stakeholders, including mothers' support groups, will be mobilised to ensure that vital health, nutrition, GBV and financial literacy messages and services reach remote and underserved populations—particularly Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IP/SSAHULTC). These interventions aim to address the immediate health impacts among pregnant women, lactating mothers and children affected by the crisis while simultaneously contributing to developing a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable social protection system.

2.2 Demographic Profile and Social Networks

The country, home to 50 million people, is estimated to consist of 19 major ethnic groups and over 597 ethnic subgroups, speaking more than 100 languages and dialects*, and Arabic as its official language.

In 2024, Sudan's population density was 29 people per square kilometres, calculated over a total land area of 1,765,048 square kilometres, with higher population concentrations in urban centres and agricultural regions. Sudan's demographic dividend lies in its youthful population, with nearly 40% under the age of 14 and 31% aged between 10 and 24 years†.

The 18 states of Sudan are divided into five regions:

Northern Region: Includes the River Nile and Northern states

Central Region: Comprises Khartoum and Gezira states

Eastern Region: Consists of the Red Sea, Kassala, and Gedaref states

Southern Region: Encompasses Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, South, North and West Kordofan states

Western Region: Covers East, West, North, South and Central Darfur states.

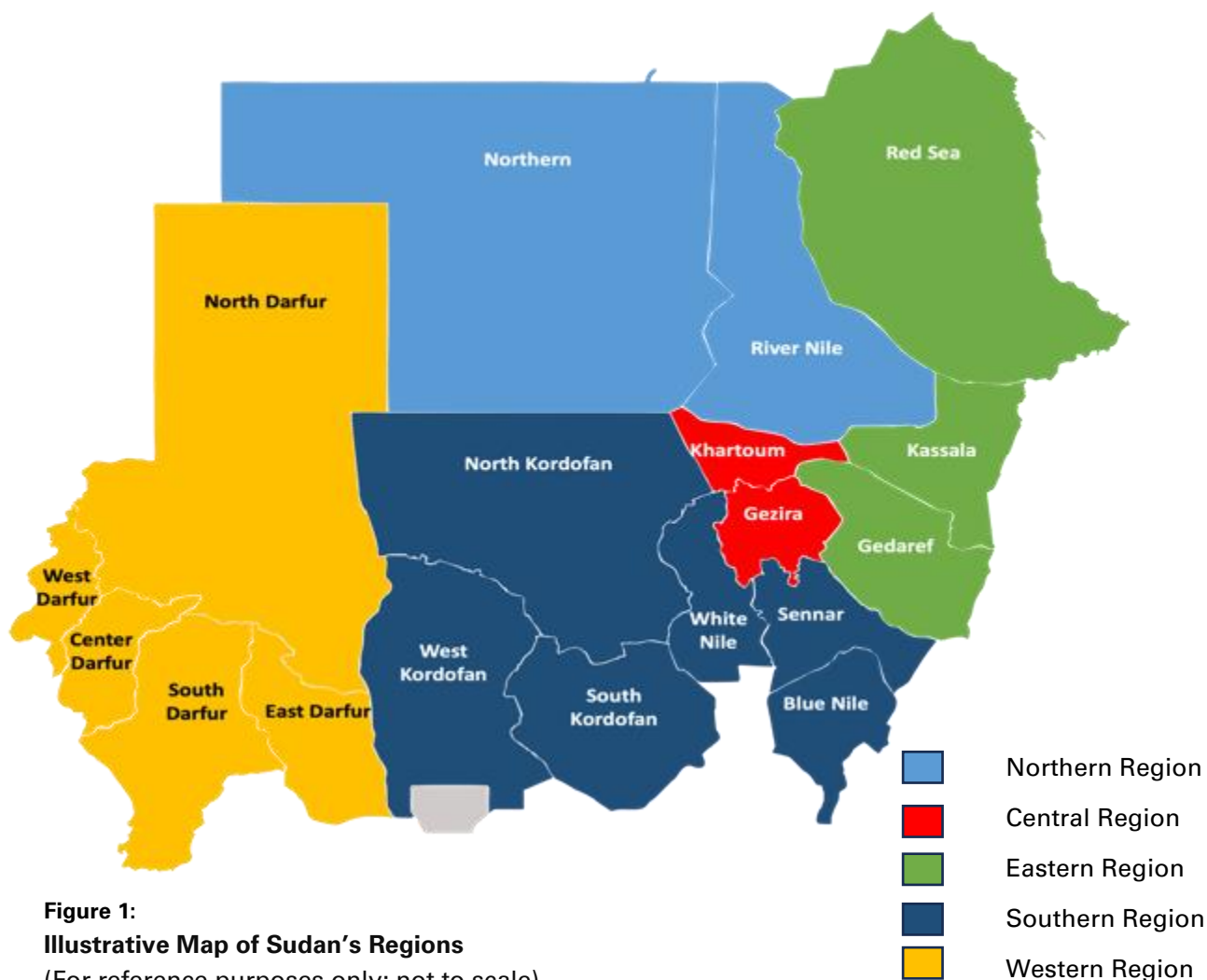


Figure 1:
Illustrative Map of Sudan's Regions
(For reference purposes only; not to scale)

* <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-ethnic-groups-in-sudan.html>

† <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/SD>

Sudan is characterised by a complex and rich tapestry of ethnicities, cultures, and languages. Its diverse population comprises numerous indigenous groups, each with distinct social, cultural, and political characteristics.

The country's history—including periods of colonization and civil wars—has significantly shaped population distribution and migration patterns. Additionally, Sudan's varied climatic zones, ranging from arid deserts to lush savannas and forests, have influenced settlement patterns and cultural adaptations across the region.

This diversity is a defining feature of Sudanese identity, fostering a rich cultural heritage while also posing challenges for governance. The country's long history of migration and cultural exchange has further shaped its demographic composition, contributing to its dynamic and multifaceted social landscape

Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IP/SSAHUTLC) refers to indigenous and marginalized ethnic groups and communities characterized by unique cultural, social, and economic practices. Sudan is home to numerous Indigenous groups from the Nile Valley to the Nuba Mountains and the Red Sea Hills that are considered SSAHUTLC. Their territories are integral to their identities and traditional practices. These communities have often experienced historical exclusion from political and economic decision-making processes. Their deep connection to ancestral lands and territories is central to their livelihoods, cultural heritage, and overall survival. The communities depend on agriculture, pastoralism, and artisanal crafts, utilizing local natural resources sustainably. The Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and SSAHUTLC in Sudan have distinct community and social norms, traditional beliefs, and customs that influence their behaviours and access to essential services, including health, nutrition, education, WASH, and child protection. They shape decision-making processes, family structures, gender roles, and attitudes toward education, healthcare, and external interventions. Understanding these norms is essential for designing inclusive and culturally sensitive programs that effectively address the needs of these communities. IP/SSAHUTLC are also among the disproportionately affected by resource competition, displacement and insecurity.

2.2.1 *Profile of major Ethnic and Sub-Groups*

- **Arab tribes** predominantly found in northern, central, and western parts of the country including the *Ja'aliyyin, Shaigiya, Hawazma, Kawahla, Shukriyya, Batihayin, Massiriya, and Bedairiya*, among others.
 - **Nile Tribes:** Along the Nile River, particularly in the northern regions are the *Nubians*, the *Ingessena* and others.
 - **Western Sudan Tribes:** Found mainly in Darfur, tribes such as the *Fur, Zaghawa, Massalit, and Daju* contribute to the region's ethnic diversity.
 - **Eastern Sudan Tribes:** Tribes such as the *Beja, Rashaida, and Ababda* tribes inhabit Sudan's eastern regions.
- Customs and traditions in Sudan vary widely among tribes and ethnic groups, encompassing differences in clothing, cuisine, music, dance, and handicrafts.

The *Arab tribes*, approximately 70% of the total population, significantly influence the cultural and political landscape. Many of these tribes are semi-nomadic engaging agriculture and pastoralism. For instance, the *Hawazma*, who are part of the *Baggara* confederation, are cattle herders traversing areas in the Kordofans and parts of Darfur[‡].

The *Nubians*, an indigenous group with sub-groups like *Nobiin, Dongolawi*, have a history spanning a millennia living along the Nile River in northern Sudan and southern Egypt, primarily in Northern State and parts of River

[‡] <https://www.101lasttribes.com/tribes/hawazma.html>

Nile State. They have preserved unique languages and architectural styles, maintaining a distinct identity despite external influences.

The *Ingessena* people in the Blue Nile region are agriculturally based, relying on farming for subsistence with distinctive cultural practices tied to their territory.[§]

The *Beja* people in eastern Sudan and Red Sea Hills, accounting for nearly 5.9% of the population are among the oldest indigenous groups, nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists, speaking *Bedawit* and maintain unique cultural traditions. They include clans like *Hadendowa*, *Bishari*, *Amar'ar*, *Beni Amer* and others. They are known for livestock herding and their adaptation to arid environments.

The *Rashaida*, who migrated from the Arabian Peninsula in the 19th century, have retained their Bedouin lifestyle and Arabic dialect.

The *Nuba* people, comprising approximately 2.5 % of the population and, with 50 or more ethnic groups with distinct languages and dialects like *Koalib*, *Heiban*, *Tira*, *Moro*, *Otoro*, *Liri*, etc. primarily in the Nuba Mountains and South Kordofan, practice terraced farming, They are known for their rich traditions in music, dance, and wrestling and follow a mix of religions, including Islam, Christianity, and traditional African spiritual beliefs.

The *Fur* People (nearly 2% of the population) from the Darfur region speak the *Fur* language, are predominantly agrarian, cultivating crops in fertile areas of the Jebel Marra region and have a distinct cultural identity.

The *Zaghawa*, a semi-nomadic group, speak Zaghawa, inhabit areas along the Sudan-Chad border, are recognized for their resilience and adaptability** and, involved in livestock herding and small-scale trade.

The *Massalit* people, also in the Darfur region, near the Chad border, have been primarily farmers, relying on seasonal rains for crop cultivation. They speak Massalit language and retain a strong cultural identity.

Other groups like *Daju* in Darfur and Kordofan regions, *Uduk* in Blue Nile region, *Berti* in Northern Darfur, *Rizeigat* in Darfur region, *Maban* in South-eastern and Upper Nile regions, *Gumuz* in the Blue Nile region bordering Ethiopia are among the prominent IP/SSAHUTLC in Sudan. The country's diverse population comprises additional smaller groups with similar characteristics.

[§] <https://discoversudan.de/en/travel/sudan/locations/nubia-and-nubian-people>

^{**} <https://101lasttribes.com/tribes/zaghawa.html>

2.2.2 *Profile by Regions*

This desk review provides a brief overview of the background and key information on social fabric across the five regions and 18 states of Sudan. The Conflict-induced internal displacement has led to the widespread dispersal of vulnerable groups, particularly IP/SSAHUTLCs, across the country.

Northern Region:

The **River Nile** and Northern States forming the Northern region of Sudan is deeply connected to the Nile River Basin, which serves as the lifeline for the majority of the population. Stretching from the far south to the far north, the Nile shapes the cultural identity of each tribe whose land it traverses, inspiring popular songs about the river and its floods—an essential aspect of Sudanese culture. Despite tribal differences, Sudanese communities in this region share a strong sense of conservatism and religiosity, with individuals deeply tied to their communities through prevailing customs and traditions. Social occasions such as weddings, religious holidays like Ramadan, and cultural practices, including circumcision, form the backbone of communal life.

Since the onset of the conflict, Northern Sudan has seen a significant influx of displaced individuals seeking refuge from ongoing violence. This steady migration has placed immense pressure on the region's already limited capacity to provide basic services, particularly healthcare, in an area prone to health risks and disease outbreaks. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the displaced population in Northern Sudan had increased substantially by June 2024. However, humanitarian responses have been inadequate, with only a limited number of aid organizations actively addressing the growing needs. Northern Sudan has also become a transit point to Egypt, with approximately 5,000 people gathering daily at the Egyptian consulate in Wadi Halfa, hoping to secure visas.

Demonstrating traditional community solidarity, many families in the region have opened their homes to displaced relatives, friends, and strangers. In some instances, more than 10 families share a single household, while mosques, Khalwas, and schools have also been repurposed as shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, the prolonged crisis and limited resources have intensified competition, leading to growing tensions and conflicts within host communities and among displaced populations, further exacerbated by overcrowding at key gathering points.

Southern Region:

The Southern Region of Sudan with states - Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, South Kordofan, North Kordofan, and West Kordofan - has been significantly affected by conflict, with parts of the area experiencing prolonged instability even before the current crisis. Many locations in this region have faced restricted humanitarian access for extended periods, which has disrupted essential services, including immunization programmes and other basic health interventions.

Since the onset of the war in April 2023, the region has witnessed large-scale displacement, with a substantial number of people crossing the border into South Sudan in search of safety. The control of territories by different factions—some areas under the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and others under the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)—has further complicated humanitarian operations, severely restricting aid delivery and access to vulnerable populations.

Communication networks in this region have also been severely impacted. In certain areas, such as the Blue Nile, regular communication systems, including the internet and telephone networks, have been non-functional for extended periods. The lack of consistent communication infrastructure continues to hinder the coordination of humanitarian efforts and the delivery of critical services.

Central Region:

Due to the ongoing conflict, reliable data from Khartoum and Gezira in the central region remains unavailable as the security situation continues to pose significant challenges. However, reports and observations from partners confirm the presence of numerous gathering points, community kitchens, and Takaya—charity initiatives led by youth volunteers, Emergency Rapid Response (ERR) teams, and change committee members. These Takaya provide food daily, playing a critical and resilient role in meeting basic needs, particularly in Khartoum and Gezira, despite the unstable conditions.

Large parts of the Central Region remain inaccessible, and people displaced from these areas have scattered across various locations both within Sudan and abroad, including those who fled to Egypt via the northern borders. A significant portion of the population displaced from Khartoum initially sought refuge in Gezira before relocating further to Gedaref or River Nile states.

The scarcity of resources, compounded by the emotional and psychological toll of prolonged displacement, has intensified tensions between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. Many IDPs have experienced multiple displacements, often carrying deep trauma and loss, which further exacerbates their vulnerability. The lack of coordinated aid and the protracted nature of the crisis have created a sense of competition rather than cooperation between displaced populations and host communities.

Communication and connectivity in the region are highly unstable. Additionally, parts of the region are under the control of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), while others remain controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), further complicating humanitarian access and coordination.

Western/Darfur Region:

The Western Region, encompassing West Darfur, South Darfur, North Darfur, East Darfur, and Central Darfur, has been deeply affected by the ongoing conflict. A significant portion of the population has been displaced, with many seeking refuge in Chad and other locations. Communication infrastructure in the region is highly unstable, with regular internet and phone services unavailable in most areas. However, Starlink satellite connectivity is operational in some locations. Control over the region is divided, with parts under the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and others under the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), complicating access and coordination of humanitarian aid.

Darfur's history is intrinsically tied to its tribal structure and geography. The land is traditionally divided into tribal territories, locally referred to as "Dar", meaning "home" in the local language. The society of Darfur is organised into a hierarchical system, with the family as its foundation and the leader of the ethnic group at the top. Each ethnic group functions as an independent social entity. These areas carry the names of their respective tribes, such as Dar Masalit and Dar Zaghawa, signifying the tribes' historical and territorial claims. Tribes in Darfur have historically wielded significant power and influence, with each maintaining a distinct cultural and social presence rooted in centuries of tradition.

The region's tribal gatherings were historically shaped by economic activities:

- Camel and sheep herders in the northern areas
- Farmers in the central regions
- Cattle herders in the south

The conflict has disrupted this traditional social fabric, displacing communities and eroding tribal cohesion. The region's historical tribal divisions and resource competition have further fuelled tensions, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis

Eastern Region

The Eastern Region of Sudan, comprising the Red Sea, Kassala, and Gedaref states, is a geographically and culturally distinct area bordering Ethiopia and Eritrea. Historically, it has served as a critical corridor for migration and trade, as well as a host to Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee communities, with established camps reflecting its long-standing role in humanitarian assistance. The localities in the state of this region are among the proposed targeted areas of the SANAD-MCCT+ project.

The region is home to diverse ethnic groups, including the Hadandawa, Bani Amir, Beja, and Rashaida, among others. Many of these communities maintain nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles, with livelihoods traditionally centred around pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, and cross-border trade. While simple Arabic is widely understood, numerous indigenous dialects are spoken, reinforcing the region's rich linguistic and cultural diversity.

Since the onset of the war in April 2023, the humanitarian crisis in the Eastern Region has escalated, straining already fragile local infrastructure. The influx of displaced populations from conflict-affected areas has increased pressure on essential services, particularly healthcare, education, and food security. Many communities face limited access to healthcare, especially ANC and PNC, and heightening risks of disease outbreaks. Education disruptions have been severe, with children—especially girls and marginalized groups, including Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IP/SSAHUTLCs)—at risk of losing learning opportunities and at risk of increased GBV.

Despite these challenges, the region's strategic position along key trade routes and its proximity to Port Sudan, the country's primary seaport, provide avenues for economic activity. However, the urban-rural divide is stark, with urban centres like Port Sudan benefiting from relatively better services while rural and border areas remain highly vulnerable. The ongoing crisis underscores the need for strengthened social services, inclusive governance, and targeted humanitarian interventions to address the growing inequalities and safeguard the well-being of affected communities.

2.3 Socio-economic and Cultural Analysis

The Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (SSAHUTLC) in Sudan have distinct community and social norms, traditional beliefs and customs that shape their behaviours and access to health, nutrition, education, WASH and child protection services. These norms are deeply rooted in cultural traditions and environmental contexts.

- **Gender Disparities:** Norms often prioritise boys' health and education over girls', with early marriage and domestic responsibilities limiting girls' education. Despite their caregiving roles, women have limited influence in decisions regarding health, nutrition, and protection for themselves and their children.
- **Harmful Practices:** Harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and corporal punishment persist in some communities, influenced by tradition and societal expectations.
- **Role of Elders:** Elders in many communities are gatekeepers for decisions on maternal health, immunisation, nutritional needs, education and treatment of illnesses. Traditional knowledge and healers gain prominence and formal education is viewed as less important.
- **Access Challenges:** Cultural norms in remote areas may discourage travelling long distances to health facilities and schools, especially for girls.
- **Community Engagement:** Informal education through storytelling, oral history, and apprenticeship may be valued alongside formal education. Trust in traditional service providers such as healers and others for decision-making related to family care practices.

Internal Displacement of People

The unprecedented displacement of people since April 2023 within and outside Sudan's borders profoundly affects the social fabric of communities, creating both immediate and long-term challenges for social cohesion, cultural preservation, and community resilience. The key factors in consideration emerging from the IDP situation for the SA-SRMF are:

- **Strain on Host Communities:** resulting in resource competition and social tensions due to overburdened services, including health, water, sanitation, education services
- **Disruption of traditional social structures and leadership:** leading to erosion of community bonding, informal conflict resolution structures and decision-making in indigenous communities
- **Fragmentation of families:** emerging from separation and weak familial roles for women and children
- **Loss of cultural practices and identity:** due to pressure to assimilate and conform with dominant culture, give up traditional practices rooted in ancestral lands, risking the loss of distinct identities and languages
- **Social Alienation, Psychological stress:** often caused due to stigma in host communities, isolation, loss of homes and livelihoods impacting ability and motivation to participate in community life
- **Intergenerational impact on social cohesion:** prolonged displacement may lead to unaddressed latent tensions among IDPs and host communities, resulting in long-term divisions.

The Urban-Rural Divide

The urban and rural divide is a defining feature of Sudan's socio-economic and political landscape, shaping the lives of its people. Approximately 66% of the population resides in rural areas, while 34% live in urban centres. This divide highlights significant differences in living conditions, access to health, nutrition, education and economic opportunities. Arabic is the official language and used by majority of people in urban areas and significant shifts in social and gender norms is also observed. Urban areas, characterised with better infrastructure, developed economic environments and a history of stronger trade and social interactions, tend to promote interdependencies in relationships among communities. Urban centres have significant number of working professionals and industrial workers.

In contrast, rural and peripheral communities are agrarian, with notable gender disparities in community decision-making. Rural areas offer limited access to quality services, economic opportunities, poor infrastructure, and high poverty rates, exacerbating the marginalisation of IP/SSAHULTC groups. Women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership roles and networks at the community level.

Urban centres offer better access to education and healthcare, but indigenous groups often settle in overcrowded, under-served informal settlements, where disparities persist. Urbanisation often leads to the erosion of cultural identity, as indigenous individuals face pressure of assimilation. Loss of traditional practices and languages is a common consequence among these groups. Urban migration may offer some opportunities for political engagement but often isolates indigenous individuals from their communities, diluting collective advocacy efforts. Urban areas serve as refuge for internally displaced individuals, but they face challenges integrating into urban economies and accessing services, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability.

Sudan's cash crisis impacts the urban-rural divide, with vulnerable groups like women IDPs and IP/SSAHULTC and predominantly rural communities facing more significant challenges in accessing financial services. While urban areas have comparatively better access to digital banking, many rural populations remain reliant on cash transactions. The phasing out of smaller banknotes and withdrawal limits have made cash access more difficult, particularly for those without bank accounts. There are concerns that without improved financial infrastructure and digital literacy, vulnerable groups especially rural communities may face heightened economic strain and limited access to essential goods and services.

The **SANAD MCCT+** acknowledges the importance of understanding the distinct and diverse cultural identities and norms of various groups, their vulnerability to conflict, historical marginalization, and the impacts of urbanization. As the current conflict has caused unforeseen displacement of people, it has also impacted social structures, shattered livelihoods, and intensified ethnic and regional tensions.

The SA-SRMF for the project aims to foster inclusive engagement and accountability frameworks that address the specific needs of IP/SSAHULTC, ensuring their meaningful participation in the design and implementation of SANAD MCCT+ activities. The human capital sensitive cash transfer is a critical enabler in UNICEF efforts to rebuild cohesion, preserve cultural identities, and foster resilience within affected communities.

2.4 Social Networks and Community Structures

2.4.1 Role of Social Networks and Humanitarian Aid:

Several years of political upheaval compounded by a crippling economic crisis and natural disasters has resulted in the multiplication in the proportion of vulnerable children and women in Sudan. Sudanese economy was stressed and spiralling downward, suffering from structural trade and fiscal deficits, widespread poverty, high inflation, limited infrastructure, and regressive taxes. Prior to the onset of the war in April 2023, about 9.3 million people needed humanitarian support across Sudan.

The ongoing crisis has intensified economic strain and resource competition, particularly in areas hosting large numbers of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). Host communities and displaced populations often vie for limited services and opportunities, exacerbating tensions and placing further stress on fragile community networks.

Structural vulnerabilities in healthcare, nutrition, education, and child protection have deepened. The healthcare system, already fragile, is now critically overstretched, with damaged facilities, displaced medical personnel, and severe shortages of essential supplies. Access to basic services, including antenatal and postnatal care, has sharply declined, exacerbating maternal and child health risks. Inconsistent mapping of available healthcare services further hinders the effective integration of cash transfers with essential health services. Food insecurity and malnutrition are worsening, leaving millions struggling to meet their nutritional needs. At the same time, the collapse of formal education systems threatens to deprive millions of children especially girls of learning opportunities

The crisis has intensified Gender-based Violence, with women and children facing heightened risks due to the mass displacement and breakdown of community protection mechanisms and social safety nets. Child protection concerns are escalating, with rising cases of recruitment into armed groups, child labour, and early marriage, as families struggle to cope with extreme economic hardship.

Critical gaps in social protections systems including beneficiary data in conflict-affected areas, due to ongoing displacement and shifting population dynamics remain a challenge. Without urgent and sustained interventions, the compounded effects of conflict, displacement, and service disruptions will have lasting humanitarian and developmental consequences, deepening intergenerational cycles of vulnerability and instability.

Community-based structures and networks have always played a vital role in fostering community engagement and participation across rural and urban settings in Sudan. They foster social cohesion and enhance resilience, especially in the conflict-affected and vulnerable settings. These networks are the foundation for mutual support, resource sharing and collective action, helping people recover from shocks. These grassroots platforms enable local populations to voice their concerns, actively contribute to decision-making processes, and address shared challenges.

These structures are pivotal in shaping community-driven solutions by empowering individuals to take ownership of local issues. However, their effectiveness varies depending on the location, resource availability, and access to external support. Despite these variations, community-based structures remain central to Sudan's crisis response and offer adaptable and inclusive frameworks for outreach and implementation.

The ability of social networks to mobilise resources, foster collaboration, and adapt to evolving challenges underscores their value in the effective design and implementation of SANAD MCCT+. Their ability to adapt and mobilise resources effectively highlights the value of grassroots engagement in addressing complex, evolving challenges.

The dynamic nature of these community-based networks underscores their significance in both crisis response and long-term community development. Their ability to adapt and mobilise resources effectively highlights the value of grassroots engagement in addressing complex, evolving challenges.

These challenges highlight the need for the SA-SRMF in SANAD MCCT+ to map and engage community-level networks and structures to address immediate project implementation needs and long-term goals.

The integrated Social Networks Analysis for SA-SRMF supports SANAD MCCT+ in:

- **Leveraging Community Networks:** Use existing grassroots formal and informal structures to promote inclusive participation and decision-making in project planning and implementation.
- **Address Cultural Barriers:** Integrate Social and Behaviour Change strategies to overcome deeply rooted norms and increase acceptance of education, particularly for marginalised groups.
- **Foster Social Cohesion:** Implement SANAD MCCT+ in a culturally relevant, sensitive and appropriate manner. This will benefit both host communities and IDPs, reduce tensions, and enhance resilience.
- **Build Local Capacity:** Strengthen community-based networks to sustain SANAD MCCT+'s efforts, even in resource-constrained environments.

The SANAD MCCT+ implementation will be scaled progressively in localities across the proposed states based on the criteria outlined in the Project Implementation Manual. By aligning SA-SRMF for SANAD MCCT+ interventions with the strengths of these community-based structures, the project ensures **inclusive, resilient, and culturally sensitive** approaches that support the achievement of results.

Based on social network analysis of some accessible states and insights from engagement with other actors in restricted areas, the general picture of social networks indicates that community-based institutions are key actors and gatekeepers of community action. These diverse community structures and networks are vital in addressing the humanitarian needs exacerbated by the ongoing conflict. These actors foster community resilience, behaviour change, and service delivery.

The SA-SRMF maps the following community actors as critical agents of change and active engagement in the implementation of SANAD MCCT+ activities at local levels:

Religious Institutions: Religious institutions, across Sudan, are pivotal in providing spiritual guidance and facilitating community services. Activities include prayers in mosques, religious schools (Khalwas), churches, marriage ceremonies, and celebrations such as Eid. Religious leaders, including Imams, Sheikhs, and Sufi groups, hold significant influence within communities and are enablers for uptake of ante natal and post-natal care and other maternal and child health and nutrition services. They play an important role in promoting the value of Sanad MCCT+ among vulnerable groups, facilitate engagement of men and boys, influence the adoption of essential family practices and drive actions towards GBV prevention and mitigation. Sofism, in particular, is deeply rooted in Sudanese society, with large followings (known as Howar) that are strongly connected to their leaders, offering opportunities to support behaviour change and community participation in education.

Tribal affiliation institutions: Tribal institutions are central to Sudanese society, often acting as informal representatives of community interests and aspirations. The "Dar" system, which designates tribal territories, remains an integral aspect of Sudan's tribal dynamics. These institutions wield significant influence, especially in addressing public issues and mediating disputes and can support by ensuring public trust and integrity in grants disbursement by ensuring transparency and community alignment. They are custodians of norms that can positively influence demand for maternal and child health and nutrition services among the PAP.

Traditional Healers and Birth Attendants: Traditional healers and birth attendants play a vital role, particularly in rural areas with limited access to services. They treat common ailments, provide spiritual and psychological support, and assist with pregnancy and childbirth. Many communities trust these practitioners because of their cultural beliefs, familiarity, affordability, and proximity though their unskilled care and practices pose health and other risks. As influencers and allies, they enhance referral pathways and promote essential family-based practices.

Youth Volunteers: A notable trend has been the growing involvement of youth-led initiatives in humanitarian efforts. Across various regions, young people have emerged as key contributors in supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs). These initiatives encompass diverse roles, from distributing essential supplies such as food, medicine, and hygiene kits, to offering social support through activities like musical performances, theatre, and recreational events for children. The impact of these efforts extends beyond addressing immediate needs. They also promote solidarity and bolster community resilience in the face of adversity. By actively engaging in these initiatives, youth have become an indispensable part of the broader humanitarian response, easing some of the hardships faced by IDPs while strengthening the social fabric. Many initiatives have evolved from change committees, which, though officially dissolved, continue voluntary work. Youth groups have demonstrated remarkable capacity to mobilise resources and can be agile partners in delivering SANAD MCCT+ activities, especially in crisis settings. Youth volunteers can assist in awareness generation, sustain and personalise engagement with project beneficiaries on behaviour change, facilitate community engagement sessions, mobilise public opinion and strengthen community feedback mechanisms. Groups such as Shabkat Tazigif, Alshabab Youth Network, and Dongola Be'etkum Youth Association have shown their ability to lead initiatives directly impacting their communities.

Emergency Response Room ERR: The ERR, initially founded by young medical students, has expanded to operate nationwide. It facilitates health services, manages community kitchens, and secures funding from civil society organisations. The ERR is a prominent example of youth-led, scalable humanitarian efforts. ERR's organisational capacity and networks could be leveraged to support improved health and nutrition services, build linkages to Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) services and other support impacting attendance of children, especially girls.

Women groups: Although cultural norms often limit women's participation in community leadership, there are examples of women-led initiatives actively contributing to community-based activities. Organisations such as Durat Alneel in Dongola and Malikat Alkheer Charity in Merowe are notable examples. Women's cooperatives, focusing on traditional crafts like weaving, pottery, and embroidery, empower women by providing training, shared resources, and market access. Empowering women's groups for health promotion and community engagement activities, adoption of essential family practices, GBV prevention and active participation in school management committees can promote participation of marginalised groups in SANAD MCCT+.

Resistance Committees: These grassroots movements, active in all states of Sudan, emerged during political unrest. They are instrumental in mobilising communities, advocating for social and political reforms, and addressing injustices. Their decentralised structure allows for effective local engagement in humanitarian and advocacy efforts and can support community mobilisation efforts for health.

Civil Society Organizations and Associations (CSOs): CSOs, including non-profits, advocacy groups, foundations and community-based organisations (CBOs), play a critical role in advocating for community interests and providing essential services. Their involvement fosters social cohesion, addresses systemic gaps, and supports

vulnerable populations. Their expertise in community engagement and resource mobilisation can enhance SANAD MCCT+'s outreach and ensure effective implementation of cash transfer and behaviour change initiatives.

Associations and Cooperatives: Cooperatives in Sudan, particularly in Northern states, are vital in supporting local economies. Examples include: Agricultural Cooperatives that provide farmers with shared resources, such as seeds, fertilisers, and irrigation equipment, and improve crop marketing. Livestock Cooperatives that offer veterinary services and facilitate the collective management and marketing of livestock, veterinary services and marketing of products like milk, meat and hides. They enable trust building with communities and promoting peace building and social cohesion efforts including participation of vulnerable groups in SANAD-MCCT+ project activities.

Gathering Points Committees: Established after April 2023, these committees represent displaced populations, host communities, security forces, and authorities at each gathering point. They coordinate food distribution, resolve challenges, and act as the primary interface for service delivery and resource mobilisation. They are resourceful allies in ensuring smooth implementation of projects.

Local Initiatives: Small-scale initiatives have emerged to address specific needs in underserved areas. Examples include, Sharie Alhawadith Initiative that focused on emergency response and Fawanees Alkheir Initiative that provides essential support for vulnerable populations. These initiatives rely heavily on volunteerism and community support. These initiatives have demonstrated success in mobilising communities for healthcare and social services and can extend their efforts to Sanad MCCT+.

Support initiatives: Historically, football has been the favourite sport in the Sudan. Sports teams and fan groups have played unexpected but meaningful roles in the humanitarian response. Football clubs, for instance, have opened their premises to host displaced families. Fan groups, such as Mahmoud fi Algalb, have also contributed by mobilising resources and organising support activities. These groups can be engaged to support messaging on essential family practices.

The diverse community actors and structures across Sudan present significant opportunities to enhance the implementation of SANAD MCCT+'s two key approaches:

1. Providing regular and predictable cash transfers that support their immediate financial needs;
2. Linking beneficiaries to health services, health information, and nutrition knowledge.

These networks will be engaged through the project implementation to ensure community-driven and inclusive interventions. Their support is critical in enabling social listening efforts to understand community perceptions, solicit feedback on the quality of service delivery, and provide insights on behaviours and norms impacting the health and well-being of children and women, especially in vulnerable groups.

PRIORITISING UNDERSERVED PEOPLE IN SANAD MCCT+

Based on the generic profile described above, this desk review notes some of the traditionally underserved communities in the three states proposed for implementation of SANAD. This analysis will inform the development of locality-specific social mapping to ensure that the SANAD delivers context-specific responses.

SANAD MCCT+ is proposed to be implemented in the following three localities:

1. West El Galabat, Gedaref State
2. Merawi, Northern State
3. Port Sudan, Red Sea State

Gedaref State: Gedaref State is primarily an agricultural region, known for its vast rainfed agricultural land. The main crops include sesame, sorghum, and Arabic gum. The state has a significant number of mechanised farming schemes, with about 70% of Sudan's mechanised farming taking place here. The economy heavily relies on agriculture, which employs two-thirds of the population. The state faces challenges such as localised conflicts, border tensions, and refugee influxes. Gedaref is home to a diverse population, including Arab tribes, Beja, Nubians, and other ethnic groups. This diversity results from historical migrations and the state's strategic location near the Ethiopian border. The cultural practices in Gedaref are influenced by its agricultural lifestyle and the various ethnic groups residing in the state. The Beja people, known for their nomadic lifestyle, are one of the prominent tribes in the region. The state also hosts many refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia, adding to its ethnic diversity.

Northern State: Northern State is characterised by its proximity to the Nile River, which is central to its agricultural activities. The state has a significant amount of arable land and relies on agriculture, trade, and small businesses for economic activities. The region has good transportation infrastructure, connecting it to Khartoum and other states that are impacted by the current crisis. The cultural identity of the Northern State is deeply connected to the Nile River. The river shapes the cultural practices and traditions of the communities living along its banks. The state is known for its conservatism and strong community ties, with social occasions such as weddings and religious holidays playing a significant role in communal life. Northern State is home to various tribes, including the Ja'aliyyin, Shaigiya, and Nubians. The Nubians, with their rich history and distinct cultural practices, are one of the prominent tribes in the region.

Red Sea State: Red Sea State, with Port Sudan as its capital, is a critical area for Sudan's international trade. About 90% of Sudan's international trade passes through Port Sudan. The state faces economic challenges such as poor basic services and an economic crisis, impacting humanitarian operations. The cultural landscape of Red Sea State is shaped by its diverse ethnic groups and its strategic location along the Red Sea. The state has a rich cultural heritage, with traditions and practices influenced by its coastal environment and trade activities. The main tribes in Red Sea State include the Hadendawa, Bani Amer, Amarrar, Bisharyeen, Nuba, Rashaida, Shawigaa, and Hausa. The Beja people, particularly the Hadendawa and Bani Amer, are significant tribes in the region. The state has experienced inter-communal clashes, particularly between the Beni Amer and Nuba tribes, influencing its tribal dynamics.



The outline above focuses on active community initiatives/ structures. The diversity and expertise within current networks provide valuable opportunities for knowledge-sharing, fostering behaviour change and as entry points for service delivery. Strengthening partnerships and coordination has been identified as crucial for overcoming gaps in institutional capacity and ensuring the long-term relevance, growth, and sustainability of these networks. There is a need for in-depth assessment and analysis of strengths, opportunities, and gaps to identify potential community structures relevant for vulnerable communities in the SANAD project.

The SANAD MCCT+ project will prioritise community consultations and dialogue through the networks mentioned earlier to engage underserved groups. They will also be reached through community-based health workers, mobile teams, integrated outreach efforts, and accessing health services through fixed health sites. The marginalised and vulnerable groups among the Project Affected People (PAP) that would be prioritised include:

- a. Indigenous population and SSAHULTC such as Nubians, Copts, Arabised Sheikha, Beja Tribe and its sub-tribes
- b. Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs)
- c. Women and youth, unaccompanied and accompanied children, female-headed households, the elderly, people with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses.

This approach aims to ensure meaningful participation and equitable access to the project's benefits, addressing their unique needs and vulnerabilities.

Additionally, measures to mitigate gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) risks within program implementation require significant strengthening to ensure that interventions do not inadvertently put vulnerable groups at further risk. The SA-SRMF will link to the project's Gender/PSEA/GBV plans and Security management frameworks. Risks pertaining to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), Security Management (SM) and labour conditions are addressed in separate action plans and are therefore not included here.

As highlighted above, SA-SRMF is a dynamic, living document that will be updated based on the phased implementation of SANAD MCCT+. Changes in social dynamics based on situations on the ground and insights from engagements outlined in the project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

Specifically, the Social Risk Management Framework based on the profile of PAP described above will:

- a. Assess the presence or collective attachment, characteristics and vulnerabilities among IPs/SSAHUTLCs and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the proposed project areas.
- b. Identify potential risks, impacts, and opportunities for the SANAD MCCT+ project associated with IPs/SSAHUTLCs and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- c. Develop culturally appropriate material measures that avoid, minimise, reduce or otherwise mitigate potential social risks and impacts of the SANAD MCCT+ project for IPs/SSAHUTLCs and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- d. Align the project with the requirements of ESS7 under the World Bank Environmental and Social Standards and strengthen efforts to promote social cohesion and build community resilience.

3. SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The initial mapping of risks and social actors outlined above in this desk review will be a foundational framework for the SANAD MCCT+ project's Social Risk Management Framework (SRMF). The SA-SRMF is aligned with the project's **Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and other ESS instruments**. The SANAD-MCCT+ project aims to be a critical lifeline for Sudan's most vulnerable women and children, offering financial relief, access to healthcare, influencing behaviours, and social protection amidst an ongoing crisis. However, ensuring its effectiveness requires a comprehensive social risk mitigation strategy prioritising gender equity, community engagement, and sustainability. This SA/SRMF will align with the following mitigation plans:

Security Risks to PAP associated with the escalation of conflict, violence, or crime, impacting people and project resources, including unexploded ordinances, are addressed through the mitigation measures outlined in the security management framework for the project.

Increased risks to women, girls, and vulnerable groups during project implementation resulting in incidents of **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH)** are mitigated through the GBV/PSEA mitigation plan for the project.

The project's **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms (GRM)** described in the SEP and PIM provide a system for feedback and complaint redressal to address risks related to limited or discriminatory access to GRM among PAP, which hinders equitable resolution of concerns.

Risks associated with project **governance, coordination, and accountability** frameworks that result in ineffective monitoring and supervision are addressed in the PIM.

During the phased implementation of SANAD MCCT+, as outlined in the PIM and project work plan, qualitative processes like consultations and key informant discussions with project audiences and stakeholders described earlier will be utilised for nuanced and granular insights into social risks and any emerging unintended consequences, particularly for Indigenous Peoples (IP), Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (SSAHULTC), and other marginalised groups. The Community Development Planning processes in the SUMOUD project will also inform Sanad-MCCT+. As the project implements mobile payments, emerging and additional social risks will be included in the SA-SRMF, and appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented.

The SRMF will be reviewed periodically based on the project implementation updates and included in the progress reporting. The project coordination meetings will review the SRMF status, offering responsive leadership for designing and implementing mitigation measures. The review will be guided by the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF)—particularly ESS7—and UNICEF's core programming principles, ensuring that socially responsible and culturally sensitive approaches are adopted. These measures will align with the project's implementation strategy and the needs and realities of affected populations, fostering sustainable and equitable outcomes through the SANAD MCCT+ project.

This Social Risk Management Framework (SRMF) describes the potential risks and identifies mitigation measures designed to maximise the impact of SANAD-MCCT+ in alignment with ESS7 standards.

By embedding inclusive, conflict-sensitive, and participatory approaches, UNICEF renews its commitment in SANAD-MCCT+ to engage and strengthen resilient community systems that engender long-term human capital development, especially for vulnerable population groups.

3.1 SOCIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

The SANAD MCCT+ aims to deliver inclusive and transformative social benefits to all segments of the affected population in the project areas. However, the preliminary desk review identifies several potential social risks and impacts:

1. **Security Risks:** Escalation of conflict, violence, or crime, impacting people and project resources including unexploded ordinances
2. **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH):** Increased risks to women, girls, and vulnerable groups during project implementation.
3. **Exclusion Risks:** Disproportionate project impacts including prejudice or discrimination in access to project resources, benefits and decision-making processes for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, especially marginalisation of PLWs from project benefits. Barriers to digital financial services uptake include low trust in mobile money systems and digital illiteracy.
4. **Weak Community Engagement:** Insufficient participation of affected communities in the project risks their health, safety, and well-being and impacts their cultural heritage and traditions.
5. **Social Tensions:** Conflicts between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities over access to project benefits.
6. **Geographic and Institutional Barriers:** Challenges arising from dispersed populations, remote locations, and weak institutional capacity. Involuntary acquisition of land or natural resources, or restrictions on their access, use, or tenure.
7. **Monitoring and Accountability:** Insufficient supervision, lack of robust monitoring mechanisms, and inadequate accountability frameworks.
8. **Feedback and Complaint Redressal:** Limited or discriminatory access to grievance redressal mechanisms hinders equitable resolution of concerns.
9. **Normative and Cultural barriers:** (including adverse health-seeking behaviours and social norms impacting adoption of health services, low buy-in of Plus components)

MONITORING & ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

- SRMF implementation will be monitored as part of the project coordination and field review meetings outlined in the PIM. The PDM will also serve as an avenue to monitor key SRMF indicators.
- Updates to SRMF actions - based on feedback from PDM and community monitoring - will be reported using the same formats and frequencies as other project components, ensuring seamless integration and adaptive management.
- Given the one-year SANAD-MCCT+ project timeline, the implementation of SRMF actions will be fully integrated into existing UNICEF programme structures, workplans and budgets. Activities will be embedded within community outreach, sensitisation, and social mobilisation platforms at state and locality levels
- Dedicated staff from Social Policy, SBC, and sectoral teams will lead implementation, with support from existing implementing partners to ensure efficient use of resources without establishing parallel systems.

3.2 SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures	Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
1. Marginalised communities and vulnerable groups, including Indigenous Peoples (IP), SSAHUTLCs, IDPs, may be excluded during the registration and enrolment phase	Proactive Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Other Vulnerable Groups The project will implement group-specific actions and consultations to address barriers they face. These actions—including customized outreach, targeted stakeholder engagements, and culturally appropriate communication—will be documented as the SA-SRMF evolves, providing lessons learned for future. Specific actions proposed based on the desk review are: 1.1. Engage Implementing partners as outlined in the SEP to facilitate inclusive consultations that ensure participation of PLWs from vulnerable groups including IP/SSAHUTLC from the project initiation during registration and enrolment phase. 1.2. Conduct social mapping of project localities to: 1.3. Identify additional specific risks (e.g., exclusion of IP/SSAHUTLCs, digital literacy gaps) and opportunities (e.g., strong tribal leadership, youth networks) in each area. 1.4. Assess cultural norms and traditional health practices that may help—or hinder—health and nutrition service	- # of separate consultations held with IP/SSAHUTLCs - % of beneficiaries aware of selection criteria - # of IEC materials developed in local languages - % of PDM respondents reporting fair inclusion	Q1 Throughout the project cycle Q1 Throughout the project cycle	UNICEF Social Policy Specialist UNICEF SBC Specialist and Implementing Partners

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures	Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
	uptake, especially among Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs). 1.5. Determine targeted engagement strategies for traditional leaders, elders, or healers, leveraging their potential to complement efforts. 1.6. Facilitate separate consultations with marginalised groups. Gain qualitative Insights on access, control and independence in decision-making on cash and mobile transactions among women. 1.7. Develop culturally sensitive IEC and other behaviour change tools, materials and inclusive practices in community sensitisation and beneficiary identification activities. 1.8. Ensure communication to IPs on selection criteria 1.9. Organise special registration events (location, timing) for vulnerable groups identified in the localities. 1.10. Setup and design venues that promote participation of PLWs from most vulnerable groups. 1.11. Implementing Partners (IPs) to institute a system of trusted community intermediaries or designated support persons to assist PLWs or their			

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures	Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
	alternates (proxies) in receiving and managing the cash benefits. 1.12. Ensure Posters and other awareness generation materials and outdoor messaging amplify selection criteria that prioritise vulnerable groups. 1.13. Create communication pathways and widely disseminate using multi-media prototypes for PAP to clarify fears and doubts on registration and enrolment, cash and mobile payment processes, identification, role of proxies, CFM, etc. 1.14. Utilise Community helpdesk, WhatsApp chatbot, SMS, FAQs, public announcements, community influencers to sensitise vulnerable groups. 1.15. Disseminate digital literacy and online safety related messaging to build trust on mobile payments especially among PLWs from vulnerable groups. 1.16. Utilise PDM to gain insights on perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the project implementation among beneficiaries. 1.17. Adopt Information disclosure policies of UNICEF in all project communication with PAP. 1.18. Implement code of conduct for third-party service providers and community level functionaries including personnel at registration venues to prevent any		Q1 Throughout the project cycle	

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures	Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
	form of discrimination of vulnerable groups. 1.19. Document actions by marginalized group including IP/SSAHULTC 1.20. Include monitoring of exclusion prevention measures across the project life cycle.			
2. Grievance systems may not be accessible to all beneficiaries or may favour certain groups.	2.1. Leverage U Report and other UNICEF tech-enabled solutions as part of integrated feedback mechanisms and grievance systems. 2.2. Explore partnerships with telecom service providers to enable zero-rated data, technology and media access. 2.3. Contextualise, adopt and widely disseminate UNICEF's data privacy and confidentiality policies with all PAP. 2.4. Establish a learning feedback loop for the project for ESS instruments. After each project cycle, compile learnings on inclusion efforts (what worked, what failed, and why) 2.5. Facilitate Staff and partners training programmes for convergent application of ESS instruments	Refer GRM action plan	Q2	UNICEF Social Policy Specialist UNICEF SBC Specialist

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures	Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
3. Limited community involvement due to displacement and disrupted social networks	3.1. Advocate for IDPs and affected groups to engage in local governance structures and community systems. 3.2. Support community networks and integrate their participation in project implementation. 3.3. Strengthen outreach activities in IDP settlements and underserved areas.	- # of community networks engaged - # of IDPs participating in community forums - # of orientation sessions conducted - % of stakeholders demonstrating understanding of neutrality principles	Q2	UNICEF Social Policy Specialist UNICEF SBC Specialist and Implementing Partners
4. Engagement with vulnerable groups in sensitive contexts may cause perception of bias and conflicts	4.1. Demonstrate neutrality in project interventions through published Communication and IEC Materials of UNICEF and partners . 4.2. Provide orientation to all stakeholders on core humanitarian principles and approaches of SANAD-MCCT+.		Throughout the project cycle	UNICEF Social Policy Specialist UNICEF SBC Specialist
5. Third-party service providers, volunteers and other active social networks may face opposition during implementation	5.1. Engage volunteers and other functionaries from local communities in consultation with community leaders. 5.2. Collaborate with local authorities to ensure the protection of volunteers and all stakeholders. 5.3. Train members of social networks especially women, girls, IDPs and IP/SSAHULTC volunteers on safe outreach, community engagement strategies.		Throughout the project cycle	Implementing Partners
6. Tensions may arise between displaced populations and host	6.1. Context-specific integration of social cohesion programmes to promote mutual understanding.		Throughout the project cycle	UNICEF Social Policy Specialist

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures		Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
communities over access to cash	6.2.	Empower community networks in both host and IDP settings to foster collaborative decision-making.	- # of volunteers and FLWs trained on engagement strategies - # of coordination meetings held with local authorities - % of host and IDP community members participating jointly - Reports of tensions or conflict reduced over time		<i>UNICEF SBC Specialist and Implementing Partners</i>
7. Digital and financial exclusion of PLWs, especially from vulnerable groups emerging from intra-household tensions, cultural resistance or distrust	7.1.	Integrate UNICEF efforts in Sudan and expertise in engendering normative shifts through digital and community engagement opportunities that promote male engagement in adopting positive family practices, parenting, women’s autonomy in cash transfers and use of mobile payments.		Q2	<i>UNICEF Social Policy Specialist</i> <i>UNICEF SBC Specialist</i> <i>Implementing Partners</i>
	7.2.	Engage Mothers’ support groups and other community actors for GBV risk assessment and sustained adherence to maternal and child health care practices.		Throughout the project cycle	
	7.3.	Develop easy-to-understand, interface/touch point focused (facility/community/HH/mobile teams) communication and training materials and conduct in-person demonstrations for women on digital and financial literacy			
	7.4.	Linkage to GRM measures such as Helplines, Helpdesks for digital and financial literacy			

Social Risks and Impacts	Mitigating Measures	Indicators	Timeline	Accountability
		- # of MSG-led financial literacy sessions held - % of women reporting confidence in managing cash - # of men sensitised on supportive family practice		

OPERATIONALISING THE SRMF

The operationalisation of the Social Risk Management Framework (SRMF) will be embedded within the overall governance, implementation, and accountability architecture of the SANAD-MCCT+ Project, as outlined in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM).

Integration: The PIM serves as the operational backbone for the project and outlines processes for registration, enrolment, grievance redress, social mobilisation, payment, and monitoring. The SRMF aligns with these processes by identifying social risks across the project lifecycle and providing mitigation measures that are to be implemented by the same actors and systems detailed in the PIM. For example, SRMF mitigation actions related to exclusion risks during registration are linked to Section 2.1 of the PIM on targeting and enrolment procedures, ensuring that the same operational actors (enumerators, registration teams, IPs) apply inclusive practices.

Institutional and Accountability Alignment: Responsibilities for SRMF implementation align with institutional roles detailed in the PIM—especially for UNICEF’s Social Policy, SBC, AAP, and field coordination teams and implementing partners responsible for community engagement. Central to the SRMF and the PIM, feedback and grievance mechanisms will use shared platforms such as U-Report, helpdesks, and hotlines, ensuring unified tracking and response.

Linkages with Other Project Plans: The SRMF is linked with the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) through actions on consultation and participation; the Gender/GBV/PSEA Action Plan through measures addressing the risk of harm, norms, and male engagement; the Security Management Framework (SMF) for actions on conflict sensitivity and safe access.

The PIM references these plans, and operational coordination meetings will ensure harmonised implementation.

Recommendation for Studies:

1. Locality level Social Mapping
2. Power dynamics between the HC, IDPs: utilizing an oral history approach to learn from the shared life experiences,.
3. Shared relationship and self-efficacy in the context of displacement challenges .
4. Behavioural Insights on family-level consumption patterns
5. Role of local networks and local initiatives in social change
6. Validate and Update Data: Contextualize and update information from desk reviews by collecting real-time, community-specific data.
7. Understand Cultural Contexts: Garnered detailed understanding of unique cultural practices, social structures, and language preferences of IPs/SSAHUTLCs.
8. Promote Inclusion: Conduct stakeholder engagement with project-affected parties, particularly Engaging groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities, youth) to ensure equitable project benefits.

References

1. People with Disabilities (PWD) integration.
2. UNICEF Study on Social and Behavioural Norms_Sudan_Child Discipline_Nov 7
3. UNICEF Study on Social and Behavioural Norms_Sudan_Child Marriage_Baseline Report-Nov 28-Comments-Responses
4. UNICEF Sudan Child Feeding Qualitative Report
5. UNICEF Sudan Xenophobia Qualitative Study Report_FINAL
6. SNA report- Northern State; River Nile State; Gedaref State
7. Barrier to immunisation study
8. Desk review, social cohesion, and peacebuilding in the novel of coronavirus

ANNEX 1:

Workers Standard of Conduct

I will work in the best interest of the project-affected communities upholding the highest standards of care, respect for diversity, integrity, trust, accountability/professionalism, sustainability, but also humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence in the provision of services to them.

- I will work in ways to prevent and reduce the risk of any misconduct, wrongful and negligent behaviour toward children and adults, including but not limited to actions that may result in the following:
- I will not engage in violence – including psychological, physical, emotional, verbal; any form of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment to individuals.
- I will not engage in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) including any form of sexual misconduct such as Child Marriage, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) or Sexual Harassment (SH).
- I will not engage in abuse of authority, meaning the improper use of a position of influence, power, or authority against another person in the workplace and community
- I will not engage in discrimination against anyone based on a person’s language, age, disability, race, ethnicity or social origins, religion, political or other opinions, indigeneity, nationality and migration status, property, gender, sexual orientation, or any other grounds, in particular women and girls.
- I will not engage in economic exploitation, such as child labour, forced labour or illegal labour; or economic violence, such as denial of access to resources, opportunities, and services.
- I will ensure compliance with occupational Health and Safety issues because of noncompliance with labour standards as per the national labour law.
- I will never exchange money, employment, goods, or services with anyone- including exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries for sex or sexual favours.
- I will never engage in any sexual activity with children. It shall not be a defence that I was mistaken with the age of the child concerned
- I will report cases of sexual exploitation and abuse to management without delays
- I will not engage in any other harm to individuals coming in contact with the project.

I will work in ways to prevent and reduce: the risk of fraud, waste, and misuse of resources and assets; and the risk of abuse to withhold assistance.

I will work in ways to support and ensure respect for the environment – in particular, by preventing pollution, misuse of natural resources, damage to biodiversity, damage to cultural heritage, etc.

I must maintain strict confidentiality and security of all information about the project-affected communities. I must report immediately any suspicions regarding violations of any of the above standards through calling UNICEF Sudan Toll Free Line 6664 , or email to sudan.feedback@unicef.org, or send a WhatsApp message to +249900747913 (**within 24 Hrs from learning of the event**) via the established Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms in good faith and cooperate with any investigation that may be required. I confirm I understand and accept the minimum standards as detailed above, and I will comply with them.

Name			
Role		Date	
Organization		Signature	
Contact Info (Email or Phone Number)			

END OF REPORT