



GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY : A STUDY OF SUDAN WAR

**Kavery Rao
Student
Amity University**

Chapter 1:- The Roots of Conflict in Sudanese Civil War: Historical Grievances

General Abdel Fattah AlBurhan, the head of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), is engaged in conflict with General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, the former deputy head of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), in the ongoing battle in Sudan. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are among the interested parties because they have been major players in Sudan's military-led transition since 2021.

The war's devastating effects, including the hundreds of lives lost, are immense. Millions of people have also been displaced by the conflict both inside the nation and into neighbouring states like South Sudan, Egypt, Chad, and the Central African Republic. There has also been a significant humanitarian crisis, significant infrastructural destruction, and a tremendous economic loss estimated to be worth over \$4 billion. The fighting has made the Horn of Africa's humanitarian crisis worse, increased political unrest and insecurity, increased the likelihood that foreign countries may intervene, and further destabilised Sudan's neighbours.

Since May 2023, the governments of the United States and Saudi Arabia have been in charge of cooperative mediation efforts in Jeddah, although their efforts have not been very successful because ceasefires have not held. Since they make up the majority of the population that suffers the most from conflict in terms of sexual and gender-based violence, women and youth are not participating in peace processes. Their voices are continuously silenced.

1.1- *Origins –*

The oppressive rule of strongman Omar al-Bashir is credited with starting the present Sudanese Armed Conflict. After leading an uprising against Prime Minister Sadiq el-Mahdi in a bloodless coup d'état on June 30, 1989, he was named Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation, effectively ending the new democratic government that had been established in 1985.

In October 1993, the Revolutionary Council was dissolved, and al-Bashir emerged victorious in a fraudulent election. Among the many difficulties Sudan faced during his administration were a serious lack of the rule of law (RoL), political unrest and instability, a worsening economic crisis, South Sudan's secession, an acceleration of internal displacement, and the negative consequences of climate change.

There was disagreement between General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) on the present crisis in Sudan. Once Omar el-Bashir was removed from office, all of the governing council's factions asserted increased stakes. The two commanders and their supporters came under increasing strain as the populace grew restless and demanded an instant march towards the restoration of civilian government. One of the key points of dispute was the RSF's absorption into the Sudan Army's mainstream.

The SAF retaliated with airstrikes to an attack on government installations by the RSF on April 15, 2023. Its ground forces engaged in heavy fighting against the RSF, resulting in significant property and infrastructure devastation, casualties, and displacement.

1.2- *Root causes, dynamics and key actors of the conflict –*

Root causes - The army general-led coup against President al-authoritative Bashir's regime in April 2019 is the root cause of the present armed conflict. Sharing of natural resources between and among communities and environmental conditions are common causes of destructive cross-border communal conflicts. Alternatively, the cross-border character of environmental problems. Frontier-blindness, disobedience to international environmental regulations, and pastoral groups abusing the vulnerability of state frontiers have all contributed to the development of full-blown, eventually dysfunctional (violent) conflict.

Dynamics of the conflict - Sudanese conflicts have always been rooted in regional inequalities, power struggles, and structural injustices. These frequently lead to disputes centred on identities, such as those involving racial and religious identities.

Lack of acceptance of diversity among the more than 597 ethnic subgroups and 19 major ethnic groups, who speak more than 100 languages and dialects, is the root cause of ethnic violence. Muslims who speak Arabic make up the largest ethnic group, making up an estimated 70% of the overall population.

Sudan's economy is on the verge of collapse due to the ingrained macro-fiscal vulnerabilities and huge inequities resulting from the dysfunctional and elite-captured economy. Energy subsidies, which are vital to Sudan's economy, are still unfair and disproportionately favour the wealthy at the expense of the general populace. Multiple concerns based on marginalisation, uneven service delivery, and disenfranchisement of women and youth were formed by regional imbalances and patterns of social exclusion.

The lack of effective governance led to insufficient institutional capacities to prevent and manage disputes, which in turn caused intra- and intercommunal conflicts over natural resources like land and water, which were made worse by population expansion and climate change.

Key actors - In Sudan, a number of national and international players have fought for sway, which has fuelled political and religious conflicts as well as power struggles and rivalries over trade and ideological supremacy. There are visible and invisible actors, such as:

i) Visible actors:

- Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF),
- Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM-N),
- United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates,
- International bodies like the UN and EU,
- The Arab League,
- The Regional Economic Communities, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD),
- International non-state actors (NSAs), civil society organisations (CSOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Women, and the youth.

ii) Invisible Actors:

Canada, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Morocco China, Russia (Wagner Group), and Canada

1.3- Early warning signs of the conflict –

Tensions erupted for six months before to the current conflict, which was brought on by Sudan's governmental system. An obvious sign that ties with the interim ruling council were deteriorating was the disintegration of the SAF and RSF coordinated collaboration in October 2021. the beginning of a new political process with the goal of resolving fundamental issues before concluding to restore a civilian government that will oversee the nation's elections in two years. RSF demand membership in the Sudanese army, military removal from lucrative economic sectors, and the possibility of troops being held accountable for previous wrongdoings.

Two days prior to the start of the conflict, on April 13, the RSF sent troops to the northern city of Merowe. This led the army to issue a warning that the RSF had to leave Sudan immediately or face the collapse of security. The UN political mission in Sudan made pathetic independent attempts, while the Quad—the United States, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia—engaged in multiple operations to mediate a settlement to the conflict. On April 15, fighting broke out, and the two sides started a protracted, violent conflict at the expense of the Sudanese people.

Chapter 2:- External Actors and Their Influence on the Sudan Conflict

Since April 15, 2023, Sudan has been involved in a military confrontation. A high-intensity military conflict has broken out across the nation in the wake of the overthrow of long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir and the attempted transition to civilian government in 2021. The commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and his deputy, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, are the heads of the Sovereignty Council and are in charge of the paramilitary organisation known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Since fighting broke out last month between the government army and rebels from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), at least 550 people have died. The violence that is currently raging in Khartoum, one of the largest cities in Africa, has the potential to destabilise a volatile region that is bordered by the Red Sea, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa. It could also play a role in the struggle for regional dominance between the US and Russia, as well as between regional countries wooing different parties in Sudan.

In this ongoing situation, international actors are crucial. Western nations—particularly the United States—have played a major role in facilitating Sudan's democratic transition following al-Bashir's ouster. Washington halted financial support in the wake of the recent events and subsequently backed the proposal for a

new transition and civilian governance. However, the RSF has been receiving weaponry from the Russian mercenary organisation Wagner in order to combat the Sudanese army.

The administrations of the two Gulf States announced a \$3 billion aid package after Al-Bashir was overthrown, demonstrating their long-standing attempts to increase their influence in the Red Sea region. They see this as an opportunity to seize the day and establish their dominance in the area. Moreover, there are close ties between Saudi Arabia and the UAE and the RSF. Egypt maintains deep relations to al-Burhan and the national army, and it has recently backed a different path for political discourse incorporating organisations more closely associated with the army and al-Bashir's former administration.

2.1 The Regional Factor –

Similar to other crises in the WANA area, the ongoing crisis in Sudan has been significantly exacerbated by external parties such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel. Their individual interests and divergent agendas have contributed significantly to the current conflict, even though they have shared the goal of preventing Sudan from having a civilian and democratic government over the past few years. They chose to support one side over the other in order to further their own agendas.

For instance, Egypt's approach towards Sudan was incredibly faulty and short-sighted, and it has played a significant role in the ongoing conflict between Hemedti and al-Burhan. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's leadership has been committed to preventing the establishment of any kind of civilian, let alone democratic, government in Sudan since al-Bashir was overthrown. This is viewed by Sisi as an existential danger to the continuation of his rule. Consequently, Cairo has weakened the civilian component of the TSC by supporting the military faction led by al-Burhan and Hemedti. In addition, it supported the overthrow of Hamdok's government, ending the transitional phase and opening the door for the current conflicts.

Sisi's Sudan policy was based on three main goals. Initially, his goal was to strengthen military authority in Sudan so that Egypt could manage and steer it to its advantage. Secondly, he sought to guarantee that Sudan refrains from pursuing an autonomous foreign policy that may potentially impact Egypt's interests. This is especially true with regard to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile River, a key source of anxiety for Sisi's government. Third, given Egypt's current dire economic situation, Sisi sought to keep Sudan from imploding, which might present serious political, geostrategic, economic, and humanitarian issues for Egypt.

Sisi's tactics in Sudan, however, had the exact opposite effect of what was intended. Sisi's government has only exacerbated tensions and conflicts between the military and civilian forces as well as between the military and the RSF by endorsing military rule in Sudan. Sisi's endorsement of al-Burhan was a major factor in the current conflict. Sisi's endorsement of al-Burhan was a major factor in the current conflict. Egypt and Sudan have long-standing historical and geographical relations, but because of its erroneous and shortsighted policies, Egypt's influence in Sudan has recently decreased. This is demonstrated by its omission from the Quartet, which is in charge of guiding Sudan's transition and is made up of the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

2.2 Gulf's Role –

Gulf Arab nations, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have been heavily involved in Sudanese affairs throughout the last ten years. These nations maintained close links with Omar al-Bashir's former government, which was subject to international criticism for its military actions and crimes in Darfur and had significant financial and economic difficulties after South Sudan's 2011 secession. The Gulf countries provided al-Bashir's government with the backing it needed to overcome these obstacles. Al-Bashir delivered soldiers to support the two nations' operation against the Houthis in Yemen in 2015 in return for billions of dollars in grants, loans, and investments.

Following al-2019 Bashir's overthrow, the UAE and Saudi Arabia developed close ties with the heads of the RSF and the Sudanese Army. With their substantial financial resources, the two countries helped the Sudanese military block the development of civilian and democratic government in the nation, fearing the potential spread of democratic movements throughout the region. Similar to Egypt, both nations supported the coup against Hamdok's civilian administration in 2021 in spite of requests for his reinstatement and worldwide criticism. Nonetheless, each nation has unique, occasionally contradictory interests in Sudan.

There are various reasons why Saudi Arabia backs al-Burhan and the Sudanese Army. First and foremost, the kingdom aims to protect its strategic interests in the Red Sea region from prospective regional and global rivals including Russia, Turkey, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. This entails preserving peace and security in the area, protecting maritime passages, and gaining access to natural resources. Second, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) Vision 2030, which seeks to diversify the Saudi economy and establish it as a worldwide hub for trade, innovation, and tourism, is inextricably linked to Saudi Arabia's emphasis on Red Sea security. Third, the monarchy wants to safeguard its monetary and

economic commitments made in Sudan in a number of areas, such as telecommunications, energy, water, sanitation, transportation, and agriculture.

Saudi Arabia sees investments in these industries as vital to Sudan's and its own economic interests, given the country's considerable growth and development potential. Lastly, Saudi Arabia wants to solidify MBS's position as the new regional leader and strengthen its own growing influence in the region. Thus, with American backing, Saudi Arabia has been mediating in-person discussions between the rival factions in Sudan over the past few days. The goal of these discussions is to achieve a long-lasting cease-fire, which may pave the way for diplomatic discussions and, eventually, the conclusion of the current conflict.

In contrast, the UAE has developed close ties with Hemedti in recent times, seeing him as a valuable friend who can further its varied interests in Sudan and the wider region. These interests cover a range of goals. Initially, the UAE aims to destroy the relics of the former Sudanese government, especially the Islamists, whom it considers its main local, regional, and international enemy. Protecting its strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea is the UAE's goal. As a result, it and Sudan inked a \$6 billion investment agreement in December to build a new port on the Red Sea coast. Third, to ensure Sudan's food supply, it made investments in the country's agriculture sector.

Israel has been extremely concerned about the implications of the military conflict between al-Burhan and Hemedti on the chances of restoring regular relations with Sudan ever since it began. Although both nations decided to normalise their relations in 2020, they have not yet signed a detailed treaty to complete the process. For a few main reasons, Israel actually values its interests in Sudan highly. First, broadening the Abraham Accords and restoring relations with other Arab countries are priorities for Tel Aviv, along with establishing a peace treaty with Sudan. Second, Israel's geostrategic interests in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and East Africa would be strengthened by normalisation with Sudan. Third, as Israel has already developed close ties with several sub-Saharan African countries over the previous few decades, normalisation would increase its influence there. Furthermore, Sudan's wealth in natural resources and agriculture would be advantageous to Israel.

The complex web of competing goals and conflicting interests among regional groups in Sudan has made it extremely difficult to find a solution to the protracted conflict. Although these parties were expected to contribute positively to the crisis negotiations, their engagement has fuelled the conflict and made it more complex, which highlights the difficulties Sudan faces in achieving long-term peace and stability.

Chapter 3:- Gender-Based Violence and the Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan

Women in Sudan are threatened by death, relocation, and gender-based violence throughout the violent conflict. With almost 10 million people forced from their homes, Sudan has the highest rate of internal displacement in the world, almost a year after its terrible conflict began. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 6.7 million Sudanese people—most of them women—are estimated to be at danger of gender-based violence (GBV), which exacerbates the crisis. Abduction, mistreatment, and sexual assault cases are added to the 13,000 civilian fatalities that have occurred since the conflict began in April 2023.

UNFPA is bringing much-needed attention to the triple threat that women suffer from GBV, displacement, and mortality. Because the war in Gaza and Ukraine has received more media attention than the war itself, it has not received much attention worldwide.

The nation is in a state of anarchy and terror as a result of ongoing fighting between the Sudanese Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Similar to the 2005 genocide in Darfur that resulted in the estimated 300,000 deaths and more than 2 million displacements, there are once again signs and worries of ethnic-based violence.

Just four of the 189 rape instances that occurred between April and December 2023 were reported by the local media outlet Gladiator Sudan. It is nearly impossible to precisely count cases of GBV in a nation with a highly underdeveloped infrastructure and a severely damaged health care system, and many cases probably go unreported. Civilians have been caught in the crossfire between the continued violence and the lack of attention from the international community on Sudan, with women and girls being particularly vulnerable.

3.1 Widespread Fear Gender based Violence –

GBV is a combat technique that has all too often been used in Sudan. The International Criminal Court's investigations into the 2005 Darfur genocide showed that paramilitary soldiers frequently attacked women with sexual assaults. These days, forced marriages, gang rapes, sexual assault, harassment, and other types of gender-based violence are just as common. Many people have turned to social media to give advice and learn about ways to avoid rape and prevent unintended pregnancy because they have limited access to GBV services and medications like abortion pills.

The same populations that were subjected to ethnic cleansing during the Darfur genocide in the early 2000s have been the target of a large portion of gender-based

violence. Ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity have once again targeted women and men who belong to Masalit ethnic communities.

When the males in the enemy's ranks or the women in their care are abused, gender-based violence (GBV) is frequently used as a technique to degrade and emasculate them. The dismantling of women's bodies is seen in Sudan and other Muslim communities as the dismantling of a symbol of honour and purity. In addition to removing reproductive health, this kind of violence also encourages power abuses against women as a kind of ethnic cleansing.

RSF forces have allegedly attacked women by stabbing their genitalia in addition to raping them, leaving lifelong injury and sometimes even death in their wake. Women are also being kidnapped by the armed forces across the nation. The number of missing women and girls reported to the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa since April 2023 is over 104; this number typically rises when RSF expands into a new region.

Eighty percent of Sudan's healthcare facilities are closed, signalling the collapse of the country's healthcare sector. Due to the limited availability of birth control, women's only recourse is to look for ways to stop rape before it happens. According to Al-Amin, there are also few abortion pills available, such as Plan B, and traditional herbal remedies have been used to prevent pregnancy. Because of their supposed ability to trigger abortions, vaginal washes and the ingestion of cinnamon, parsley, and ginger are frequently advised. In cases of rape, women have also turned to strenuous exercise as a means of ending their pregnancies.

In some regions, youth-led Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) have taken over the role of local governments, offering community member's food, water, safety, and other forms of support. For international humanitarian organisations and ERRs working in Sudan, funding has been a significant obstacle. Recently, the UN made a plea for \$4.1 billion in aid to help the 25 million Sudanese citizens who are in need of both internal and external humanitarian aid.

Women's bodies have become battlegrounds in the Sudanese conflict, with gender-based violence (GBV) emerging as one of the most horrific weaponry employed. Survivors of violence may never fully recover from their experiences, and they may live a lifetime dealing with trauma and dehumanisation. The country's and its people's survival depends on increased lobbying, financing for basic services, and foreign aid.

3.2 The Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan –

Before the fighting started, Sudan was already dealing with a serious humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 3.7 million internally displaced people and over 15 million people suffering from extreme food shortages. Additionally, the nation was housing 1.3 million refugees, the most of whom were from South Sudan. Since April 2023, more than 9.3 million people have been forcibly displaced, according to the UN refugee agency. Of these, around two million are refugees who have fled to other countries, while over seven million are internally displaced. The official death toll from the conflict in Sudan as of May 2024 was over sixteen thousand, but the real death toll is probably much higher.

Sudan's infrastructure is being destroyed by the fighting. In densely populated locations, hospitals, prisons, schools, and other facilities have been the target of airstrikes and shelling. Health authorities have warned that cholera, dengue fever, and malaria are circulating in multiple states as conditions continue to rapidly deteriorate and millions of people lack access to safe drinking water, adding to the already intense fear of disease. Several regions of the nation are on the verge of famine, and food insecurity, which presently affects close to eighteen million people, is being made worse by growing food and fuel expenses.

Over 608,000 individuals, or nearly 46% of all newly arrived migrants, have made their way to Chad from the west. South Sudanese who had previously fled to Sudan and have since returned home owing to the conflict make up the remaining more than 561,000 refugees. The remaining refugees have fled to Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Central African Republic, each of which has substantial populations of internally displaced people and refugees.

According to UN experts, Sudan is facing the worst internal displacement crisis on record, and as long as the violence persists, there will be an increase in the overall number of refugees. Women and children make up the bulk of refugees, making them particularly susceptible to sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence. Mass executions motivated by ethnicity and the weaponization of sexual assault against the Masalit people have also been reported, mostly at El Geneina, a city in West Darfur. An inquiry has been launched by the International Criminal Court into allegations of war crimes against both the SAF and RSF.

3.3 Response of the neighbouring countries –

Several of Sudan's neighbours are still having trouble managing the refugee crisis on top of their own internal problems. In addition to Sudanese nationals, refugees who had previously fled violence and starvation in Ethiopia and South Sudan are

now returning home as five of the seven countries that border Sudan have recently experienced internal turmoil.

As the crisis intensifies, worries about foreign meddling have also increased. Egypt has tight connections with the SAF, while the RSF has received military supplies from Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar, who is supported by Russia. In order to negotiate a port-for-arms agreement, Sudan's deputy leader also travelled to Russia earlier this year. The United Arab Emirates has also been openly accused by the Sudanese army and American politicians of supplying the RSF with military equipment.

Along with posing a threat to regional economic cooperation, the conflict has affected important oil pipelines that pass through Sudan and the water resources of the Nile River. Devastating droughts and floods, as well as increased demand on access to natural resources and migratory displacement, have all been exacerbated by climate change. The Houthi rebel organisation in Yemen, which is supported by Iran, is increasingly attacking ships, putting the nation's ports along the Red Sea in jeopardy. It is said that the SAF has profited from using drones produced in Iran.

According to UN experts, Sudan's neighbours require significantly greater help. The Central African Republic, which is ill-prepared to manage new refugee flows due to its own internal turmoil, has requested extra aid. As soon as violence broke out, Chad closed its land border with Sudan, but it still helps those who manage to pass, even though Chad is suffering from a shortage of food assistance. According to Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the United States' ambassador to the UN, Washington is pressuring the UN Security Council to organise a humanitarian relief effort that would travel via Chad to reach Sudan.

3.4 Role of International Organisations –

For many years, a collection of organisations, finances, and initiatives known as a UN Country Team (UNCT) has been operating in Sudan. With the objective of reaching about fifteen million people by the end of the year, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners gave food, water, and medical care to over five million people nationwide in the first four months of 2024. In addition to the work being done by local Sudanese charity groups, a number of foreign organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and numerous Islamic relief agencies, are also providing aid.

The UN and relief agencies have been forced to temporarily suspend or reduce their in-country activities due to the war. Delivering help was further hampered when the RSF took control of Wad Madani, the capital city of Gezira state and a vital hub.

This was in December 2023. The World Food Program stopped providing aid in Gezira that same month because of the increasing level of violence, although it has recently started up again. It has been challenging for other organisations, including the International Rescue Committee, to get aid to people in need in places where there is intense fighting.

Only about 17% of the \$2.7 billion in aid asked by the UN for Sudan in 2024 will be financed; the \$2.6 billion requested in the previous year's appeal was much less than what was requested. A humanitarian summit held in France in April 2024 brought in almost \$2 billion in commitments for further foreign aid.

Families that have been uprooted from their homes in Sudan and its bordering countries are left on their own. Many also lack access to food, water, healthcare, and an education for their children in addition to a roof over their heads.

Chapter 4:- The Psychological Toll of War: The Impact on Sudanese Youth

Those impacted by traumatic events like war and displacement may have long-term effects if they do not receive treatment for their trauma. Sudan was the scene of a prolonged civil conflict that left many victims of trauma and mental illness.

Millions of people's childhoods are in danger due to the fighting. Children and families in Khartoum have been subjected to extreme violence for more than a month as two armed groups continue to fight one another for control of Sudan, transforming the five million-person city into a combat zone. Numerous children in Sudan have lost parental care as a result of poverty, armed conflict, and displacement, according to UNICEF data from 2019. Of the roughly 23 million children in the nation, 82% are raised in families, while 3.5 percent are without parental supervision; they include kids who are homeless, members of armed groups, or work as minors.

There is also bloodshed in the restive western region of Darfur, which has endured a protracted conflict for more than 20 years. According to UN estimates, 700,000 people have been internally displaced in Sudan and over 200,000 have been forced to migrate to neighbouring countries due to the current violence. Young people and children who are vulnerable to losing parental care may find themselves uprooted or relocated, estranged from their families. When children are neglected, they run the risk of being taken in by armed organisations, being exploited, being neglected as children, being trafficked, and getting married young.

4.1 – Youth in Crisis

Children in Sudan are in an especially terrible condition since they are still dealing with the fallout from earlier hardships on top of the current turmoil. Sudan already has 3.7 million internally displaced people who were driven from their homes by previous conflicts, not counting the recent influx of displaced individuals. It is necessary to include those in need of emergency help in the list of 15.8 million people who have requested humanitarian aid this year, including almost 8.5 million children. Due to a lack of resources, impoverished families are finding that raising children is too much to handle.

For children living in crisis situations, schools are essential not just because they provide them with the information and skills to reconstruct their communities after the crisis is gone. Additionally, schools can shield kids from abuse and suffering. In a nation where 34% of girls are married off before they become 18 and 12% are married before they are 15, every day that girls miss school decreases their likelihood of going back.

Children in Sudan, who live largely in areas that have been devastated by civil conflict, deal with a number of issues that negatively affect their mental, physical, and academic health. The kids find it challenging to lead regular lives because of the lack of access to healthcare and education, mobility constraints, ongoing security threats, violence (such as gunshots and bombs), and the aftereffects of armed warfare.

Many youngsters were compelled to leave their homes and seek refuge in far-off camps for internally displaced people. These sometimes congested camps offer poor living conditions devoid of basic amenities like clean water, proper sanitation, and sturdy housing. The high rate of food insecurity caused by the collapse of supply chains and agricultural systems contributes to the high rate of malnutrition.

Children affected by the conflict have experienced severe hardships and profound psychological trauma that have adversely affected their mental health in an environment where access to mental health services and other forms of support is severely restricted. They are frequently caught in the crossfire, which can result in physical harm and impairments, the death of loved ones, and even exposure to PTSD, which is typified by intense anxiety, nightmares, and flashbacks that impede social and emotional growth. Additionally, there have been allegations of an increase in sexual assaults against minors, especially girls, which results in both acute physical harm and long-term psychological trauma. Children's mental health is severely impacted when they are compelled to assume adult tasks and obligations that are much above their capacities.

Many children have lost parents or guardians as a result of war, bombs, epidemics, or even ailments that could have been prevented and were made worse by a lack of access to healthcare. Many youngsters have also been split off from their families as a result of major relocations. Separated children are occasionally made to live in different refugee or internally displaced person camps from their parents. Due to their vulnerability, these kids need immediate care and protection, which calls for a coordinated international response that includes sufficient funding, expertise, and long-term solutions.

Chapter 5:- Key Prospects for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Sudan and the Role of Women

Fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has been extremely intense since May 10, 2024, which has caused the humanitarian situation in Al Fashir and the neighbouring areas to drastically worsen. This increase in violence is a component of the wider conflict that broke out on April 15, 2023, after a shaky period of calm and resulted in widespread chaos. The world's largest displacement catastrophe has resulted from the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, forcing 8.5 million people—including 1.56 million women and girls of reproductive age—to escape their homes. Food insecurity has increased because to the conflict; over 18 million people are experiencing severe food shortages. Despite pervasive gender inequities, the Brief emphasises the contribution Sudanese women make to reconciliation and community resilience.

Media coverage of the Sudanese civil war has been inconsistent. The international community's reaction to the civil conflict in Sudan has been sluggish and frequently ineffectual. On March 8, 2024, the Security Council urged the warring parties in Sudan to immediately stop hostilities for the month of Ramadan and to engage in talks in order to find a lasting settlement to the conflict. Similar to this, insufficient financing and understaffed the UN Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding mission, which was launched in October 2023, have hindered the mission's capacity to hold offenders accountable. If the fighting continues, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) have warned of national fragmentation and the erosion of Sudan's unity.

Women's suffering is made worse by a lack of medical and psychological help, and women and children are disproportionately affected by the shortage of basic supplies like food, water, and shelter. Sixty-nine percent of those who are displaced are women, and they face insufficient living circumstances and ongoing threats of violence. Regarding humanitarian matters, the 11 November 2023 Jeddah

Commitments call on warring parties to respect agreements and permit access for help. Some support has been given by an international humanitarian meeting that will take place in Paris on April 15, 2024, and by the EU's mobilisation of an initial €72 million for aid delivery in 2024.

5.1- Role of Local Women Groups

Women's vital contributions to peacebuilding and community resilience must be supported as long as the violence persists. Long-term peace and security in Sudan depend on addressing gender disparities and empowering women. Deeply ingrained political, ethnic, and economic problems have been the main drivers of the violence, with women and children bearing a disproportionate share of the blame. The loss of access to essential sexual and reproductive healthcare is one way that this is particularly evident.

The absence of political will, ineffective peacekeeping efforts, and the international community's late and inadequate provision of humanitarian relief have left large holes in the support network for people affected by conflict. Local NGOs and women's groups have risen to the occasion and become more powerful as a result, mobilising to provide for the immediate needs of the affected populace. These grassroots groups have implemented creative, long-lasting solutions that are tailored to the needs of their individual communities because they have a deep understanding of regional dynamics and cultural nuances.

Offering community-based humanitarian help, advocacy, peacebuilding, and protection services has shown to be very successful for them. Women-led organisations in particular have been essential in fostering local conversations for peace and reconciliation and in providing safe havens for victims of gender-based violence. In situations where international efforts have failed to minimise the effects of the war, this localised method emphasises the significance of grassroots actions in reducing the effects of the conflict while simultaneously developing long-term resilience and self-sufficiency.

Women's Peace Committees (WPCs) - Women's Peace Committees (WPCs), especially in Darfur, have played a critical role in fostering peace throughout Sudan and resolving local issues. Nine WPCs, comprising women from many ethnic backgrounds, have effectively facilitated ceasefires, fostered dialogue between conflicting parties, and coordinated community peace celebrations. These committees have been effective in establishing welcoming forums where community members may voice their concerns and work together to find solutions. Their grassroots strategy, which frequently fills in gaps that traditional peace procedures find challenging to handle, has been essential in maintaining local peace.

Advocacy Networks for Human Rights and Peace - To raise awareness and enlist support from around the world, women-led advocacy groups have turned to social media and other platforms. For instance, the 'No to Oppression against Women' campaign has called attention to the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and urged accountability from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The predicament of women in conflict zones and the need for stronger protective measures have been increasingly apparent on a global scale thanks in large part to this campaign.

Women for Peace and Development Network (WPDN) - This well-known non-governmental organisation provides trauma counselling and vocational training, as well as assistance to displaced families and safe spaces for women and children. In spite of the turmoil of war, these initiatives are essential to helping women and children reconstruct their lives. Through the provision of essential services and support, WPDN assists those impacted by the war in feeling normal and in control.

Prominent Women Advocates and Media Personalities - Asha El-Karib, a well-known journalist and senior strategic advisor for the Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development (SORD), uses the media to tell the experiences and voices of women who have been impacted by conflict.¹⁵ Her work encourages women's participation in peace negotiations and increases awareness of the harm that conflict does to women. Similarly, Alaa Salah, also known as "Lady Liberty" in Sudan, came to represent the 2019 revolution that overthrew President Omar al-Bashir. Salah keeps advocating for women's rights and their active participation in the peace process.

Prominent advocate for handicapped women's rights Amira Osman draws attention to the particular difficulties that disabled women encountered during the American Civil War. Through bringing women from different religious backgrounds together for peace and development projects, Hind Makki's interfaith activities promote understanding amongst people of different faiths and ease religious tensions. Human rights activist and lawyer Faiza Mohamed, a native of Sudan, is in charge of the African Union's campaign for more engagement in Sudan and is involved in the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition. As a 2023 UN youth representative and activist from Sudan, Barkhado has contributed to initiatives that assist Sudan's democratic transition and transitional justice.