

International Day of the Girl Child – October 11, 2025

The Girl I Am, the Change I Lead:
Girls on the Frontlines of Crisis



More than 30 months into Sudan's conflict, girls are paying the heaviest price. They are being displaced, abused, attacked, married off too young, silenced, and denied education and hope. Behind every statistic is a girl whose rights, body, and future are either under threat or lost.

The devastating effects of Sudan's conflict are felt most acutely by girls whose everyday lives, dreams and childhoods have been upended in ways that statistics alone cannot capture. When families lose their livelihoods and face impossible choices, some are forced to adopt harmful coping mechanisms such as marrying off their daughters far too early, before being 18, hoping it will offer a measure of protection from armed groups or relief from poverty. For others like child survivors, they are married off to older men with multiple wives under the guise of family honor.

Key concerns

In Sudan **over 34% of the girls are married before 18**, some as young as 12 years. For these girls, childhood ends abruptly, replaced by adult responsibilities and the loss of their dreams for education, a healthy life and independence. Female Genital mutilation affects 68.8% of girls by age 14 in Sudan, affecting their physical, psychological and social wellbeing. Girls continue to be affected by trafficking, abductions, rape, child bearing and the recruitment and use by armed groups. These violations impede any chances girls have at thriving to be leaders, let alone surviving!

Survivors, their families and those trying to help them continue to bear the outcome of violence and abuse, as they live in constant fear of being stigmatized or attacked simply for asking for help, or for speaking out. Many girls who have suffered violence are silenced, not only by their trauma but by threats and intimidation that make seeking help or justice impossible.

Vital support services including health care, mental health and psychosocial support, counseling, and legal aid are often not available or hard to reach. In communities where security is fragile and resources are stretched thin, girls find themselves with nowhere to turn, hampering their recovery, safe reintegration and hope for justice slipping further away.

The loss of education weighs heavily on thousands of girls, **with over 2.5 million school aged girls out of school, representing 74% of girls in that age group**. Every day spent outside the classroom is another day of vulnerability, denying them not just knowledge, but protection, confidence, and the chance to shape their own futures. For these girls, education is more than a right, it's a lifeline, one that must be restored if they are to reclaim hope and dignity.

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The denial of reproductive health and rights (RHR) further puts girls at serious risk. Early and unintended pregnancies—often resulting from child marriage or sexual violence—threaten their health and lives, with **5.3% of women aged 20–24 having given birth before age 15** (UNFPA, *Adolescent Pregnancy Profile*). Limited access to essential services, safe delivery care, and postnatal support, combined with stigma and lack of confidentiality, leaves many girls vulnerable to complications such as fistula, anemia, and even death, undermining their future and well-being.

Girls as Leaders

Despite the challenges faced, Sudanese Girls show remarkable resilience depicted in the leadership roles they have taken up in the local responses. Girls are leading in their communities, including in displacement camps, as heads of Adolescent clubs, school clubs and networks. They also lead awareness and advocacy campaigns as well as represent peers in adult forums such as protection committees and networks. Girls have the desire, passion and commitment to lead! Let us invest and build their agency to be leaders even in this crisis context.

The Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection (CP) Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) stand united to say: girls in Sudan are not only collateral damage of this war—they are the future of peace. Investing in the safety, dignity, wellbeing and leadership of girls today is investing in the recovery and future stability of an accountable Sudan.

Key Asks

To the Government of Sudan

- Uphold safeguard of civilians, with particular attention to the protection of girls, from all forms of gender-based violence.
- Ensure perpetrators are held accountable and strengthen accountability mechanisms
- Continue to restore secure access to essential services, including education and healthcare, with an emphasis on meeting the tailored needs of girls.
- Invest in girls! They are a critical to the future of Sudan

To the Humanitarian Country Team and Partners

- Strengthen GBV risk mitigation, child protection, and reproductive health measures across all sectors, ensuring that humanitarian responses are safe, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.
- Reinforce frontline workers' skills in GBV, child protection, reproductive health, and (PSEA) through regular training, mentoring, and supervision to ensure quality, coordinated service delivery.

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- Ensure response plans prioritize survivor-centered, age-appropriate services – including access to reproductive health care – and uphold the Best Interests of the Child in every aspect of humanitarian action.

To Donors

- Allocate flexible, multi-year funding for life saving child protection, GBV and RH programs.
- Invest in local, girl-led initiatives and community-driven prevention efforts.
- Support advocacy activities that promote civilian protection, safeguard humanitarian space, and ensure safe and unhindered access to assistance – including reproductive health and Child protection and GBV services for women and girls across Sudan.

The CP and GBV AoRs urge all partners to strengthen protection and invest in girls' leadership by:

- Expanding safe spaces, holistic static and mobile response services (medical, psychosocial, legal, and livelihoods), where girls can find support and be empowered to be the leaders they have potential to be.
- Supporting girl- and women-led organizations that deliver essential protection services.
- Promoting girls' participation and leadership in humanitarian planning and community decision-making.
- Restoring access to education as a protective and empowering tool.
- Ensuring integrated CP-GBV coordination and data-driven response.
- Supporting prevention and elimination of harmful practices and negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage and FGM in order to give the girls a chance to understand, express and act on their own choices.

On this International Day of the Girl Child, the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection (CP) Areas of Responsibility reaffirm their commitment to protecting, empowering, and amplifying the voices of Sudanese girls—not merely as victims, but as leaders of change.

Investing in girls today is essential for securing peace and resilience in Sudan for tomorrow.

For more information

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