UKaid
from the Department for
International Development

Women's political participation and VAWG in Sudan

Naomi Clugston and Dr Erika Fraser   **9 December 2019**

> **Original Query:** A review of the evidence on Strategic Outcome 1 of the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in Sudan, and possible entry points for increasing women's political participation in Sudan, given recent political transitions. Please explore the links with VAWG, specifically the evidence on:
>
> - Role that VAWG plays as a barrier to women's participation and how to minimise backlash
>
> - Using women's political participation as an opportunity to address VAWG (e.g. tackling the impunity around VAWG as part of transitional justice/peace building, and women and girls' needs surrounding VAWG being left out of peace/state building due to the absence of women/women's interests at the negotiating table)
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> **Enquirer:** Sandy Scott, Africa CSSF

1. **Overview**

2. **Methodology**

3. **To what extent has Outcome 1 been achieved in Sudan to date?**

4. **Where are the entry points for increasing the likelihood of this outcome being achieved moving forward?**

5. **What role does VAWG play in preventing the fulfilment of Outcome 1?**

    a. **To what extent is VAWG used to try and prevent women from participating (VAWG as part of a backlash)?**

    b. **To what extent does pre-existing VAWG prevent women from participating.**

    c. **How can we minimise the violent backlash against women engaging in political activism or activities and support survivors of VAWG to engage in meaningful participation?**

6. **How can we use Elite and Non-Elite entry points for Outcome 1 to address VAWG?**

7. **References**

1. Overview

Sudan Country Profile:

In recent history, Sudan has experienced two civil wars, which cost the lives of 1.5 million people and led to the secession of South Sudan. Following these wars, Sudan was subject to continuing violence in the Western Region of Darfur, which has killed more than 200,000 people and displaced almost two million.

In 2019, Sudan erupted into protests against President Omar al-Bashir's authoritarian rule. These protests were largely led by women and lasted for months. On April 11th 2019, the army overthrew President Bashir and on the 12th April, Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al Burhan, was sworn in as chairman of Sudan's Transitional Military Council.

The military has promised the Council would lead Sudan through a two-year transition to civilian rule. However, opposition groups demanded this transition period be reduced. The African Union and Ethiopia supported the negotiation of a power-sharing deal. This resulted in a joint civilian-military government that has been in place since September. (BBC, 2019a)

This query explores the evidence on Strategic Outcome 1 of the UK NAP on Women, Peace and Security in Sudan (Section 3) and identifies possible entry points for increasing women's political participation in Sudan (Section 4). The report uses the Stabilisation Unit's work on Elite Bargains and Political Deals (EBPD) and their gendered analysis to structure the analysis of entry points. It also highlights linkages with violence against women and girls (VAWG) (Section 5) and explores the use of elite and non-elite entry points for Outcome 1 to address VAWG (Section 6). This rapid research query has been conducted as systematically as possible, under tight time constraints.

Key findings from this query include:

- **Outcome 1 has not been achieved in Sudan**. Women continue to be largely excluded from elite entry points and formal processes but are forging spaces for their voices to be heard through non-elite entry points. Section 3 provides a mapping of key entry points prior to, and since 2019. The evidence is stronger for pre-2019, likely due to delays in documenting women's participation in 2019, rather than a lack of participation.

- **Women continue to face a range of barriers to meaningful and representative participation,** including organisational and personal capacity (e.g. lack of funding for civil society and women's rights organisations and experience), limited networks, shrinking civil space, security risks, violence against women and girls, and male-dominated processes.

- **Possible entry points** for increasing women's political participation include three key areas of engagement: (1) supporting women's rights groups and mass action campaigns; (2) supporting women's inclusion in peace negotiations; and (3) conducting advocacy.

UK NAP on WPS Outcome 1: An increase in women's meaningful and representative participation and leadership in decision making processes, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding at community and national levels

Outcome 1 focuses specifically on the UK's support for processes that directly aim to prevent or resolve conflict, including through:

- early warning,
- mediation,
- dialogue and reconciliation processes,
- support for legitimate and effective institutions of governance in places affected by conflict.

'Meaningful and representative participation' means that women are not only present in decision-making spaces but are able to exert real influence, including (but not only) on the issues that particularly affect women and girls. 'Representative' means that those speaking for women should reflect the diversity of women's views and experiences.

(HM Government, 2018)

Examples from Sudan and other contexts are provided for how these entry points can be utilised in Section 4.

- **There is evidence of strategic perpetration of VAWG to prevent women from political participation and activism**, including both sexual and non-sexual violence. Examples include state-sanctioned mass rape and gang rape of female pro-democracy protestors in 2019, as well as ongoing perpetration of VAWG against women activists and other women engaging in political activities. Perpetrators include national security agents and police.

- **Pre-existing VAWG also acts as a barrier to women's participation,** including intimate partner violence (IPV) (with 24% of women in Sudan reporting experiencing IPV in their lifetime) and physical harassment (38%) and verbal harassment (48%) (InfoTimes, 2019, based on a survey by the Arab Barometer in 2018/19). Fear of violence restricts women's participation in public life, as does restrictive public order laws and oppressive gender norms which discourage women from participating in political activities and decision-making.

- **Strategies for minimising backlash** against women engaging in political activities and support survivors to meaningfully participate are grouped around four key areas: prevention; provision of support, partnership, and pursuit of perpetrators. As there are limited examples from Sudan, the query draws upon examples of promising practice from Morocco, Bolivian, Mali, Nigeria, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Bosnia and Syria. It should be noted, however, that these approaches are not yet comprehensively evaluated in terms of their impact on minimising backlash.

- **Women's political participation also presents an opportunity to address VAWG,** for example participation of local women and women's groups through peace accords and particularly in decision-making positions with voting rights, and traditional justice mechanisms. Although there is limited evidence from Sudan, it is likely that the same entry points recommended to improve the likelihood of Outcome 1 being achieved could also be used to address VAWG.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this query is described below.

Search strategy: Studies were identified through searches using Google and relevant electronic databases (PubMed, Science Direct, and Google Scholar) for priority sources. Key search terms included: Sudan and Peace Negotiations, -South, Sudan Outcome 1 WPS, Women's participation in Decision Making Sudan, Women's Activists Sudan, VAWG Sudan, VAWG Women's Activists Sudan 2019, Women Peace Negotiations Sudan -South

Criteria for inclusion: To be eligible for inclusion in this rapid mapping, evidence had to fulfil the following criteria:

- **Focus**: Research, studies and grey literature on women, peace and security and VAWG in Sudan
- **Time period**: 2000 – December 2019.
- **Language**: English.
- **Publication status**: publicly available – in almost all cases published online.
- **Geographical focus**: Sudan

3. To what extent has Outcome 1 been achieved in Sudan to date?

3.1 Evidence of the extent to which Outcome 1 has been achieved

Research suggests that to date, **Outcome 1 has not been achieved in Sudan**. However, evidence also shows that women have forged a space for their voices to be heard. This was articulated by **Alaa Salah,** an activist at the front of the 2019 revolutions, during a statement to the UN, who demanded that women be granted meaningful participation and protection for their rights (Salah, 2019). Spaces for women's activism have tended to be carved out predominantly through **non-elite entry points**, with women continuing to be **systematically excluded from elite entry points** and formal processes. In cases where women have been included, this seems to have been largely the result of the **efforts of Women's Rights Activists** in Sudan and **pressure from the international community**, rather than as a result of engagement by existing male power-holders. Research conducted for this report found more evidence regarding entry point utilisation prior to the 2019 revolutions than since. This may be due to a lack of up to date reporting rather than a lack of engagement, however it is not possible to confirm either way.

Utilisation of the entry points for women's meaningful and representative participation in peace processes in Sudan to date are summarised in the below table, using the structure of the Stabilisation Unit's (2019) work on Elite Bargains and Political Deals and the importance of a gendered analysis to ensure elite bargains are more inclusive:

Entry Point	Evidence prior to 2019	Evidence since 2019
Elite-Entry Points		
1. **Mediator role**	During the **Doha Process** (2007-2019) The mediation informally pursued a vague **quota for women** and other key population groups. However, the actual number of delegations for women and their composition was not made public. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)	Since the 2019 revolutions, there have been **no women in mediator roles** according to the Council of Foreign Relations. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019)
2. **Participation of elite women in elite bargaining processes as part of negotiating teams**	During the **2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement**, no women were included in formal roles. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a) During the **2006 Darfur Peace Agreement**, only 8% of negotiators were women. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a) ***The impact of their engagement:*** Their inclusion in these rounds of the Darfur Peace Agreement enabled female delegates to push for the inclusion of provisions on **food security**, protection for **internally displaced persons and refugees**, and the **prevention of gender-based violence.** (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a)	Since the 2019 revolutions women have been **widely excluded** from peace negotiations. (Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux, 2019) Women **comprise 15% of the negotiation delegation**. They serve as 3 of 20 representatives for the Two Areas Track[1] of the negotiations. They are not represented as negotiators in the Darfur Track. All three of the African Union mediators are male. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a)

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[1] In 2014, the African Union Peace and Security Council launched a "two-track-one-process approach". This brought parallel negotiations on Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) under one umbrella. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a)

			The impact of their engagement:
		Some reports raise concerns that the women included in these negotiations predominantly **represented the agendas of their respective party delegation**, rather than representing women broadly. These reports suggest that this **limited discussion of gender equality and women's rights.** (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)	As a result of their inclusion in the Two Area Track of the current peace negotiations, women have been able to encourage negotiators to address issues such as **access to education**. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a) *"When women were sitting in Abuja, they completely **changed the process** . . . because it was practical. . . . The men were positioning who was going to be the president, who was going to be the vice president, and the women were saying, 'When will my children get food? When will my relatives get water?' It **changed the dynamics**."* — [Mobina Jaffer](#), *former Canadian Special Envoy to the Sudan Peace Process* (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a)
3.	**Leveraging international norms**	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
4.	**Local practices to put pressure on elite**	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
5.	**Educating elites**	Between 2014-2017 16 women's organisations ran **workshops and trainings** for local administrators, funded by a small grant from the Dutch government. These workshops tackled the ways that **women and children were affected by the war**. They appealed to religious beliefs and Sudanese values, calling for a **"renewal of tradition".** (Zalan, 2017) *Impact:* According to reports, **local officials and warlords were convinced** by the mediation methodology put forward by the women's organisations and embraced this. (Zalan, 2017)	No evidence of use
6.	**Decision rules matter**	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
7.	**Economic incentives**	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
8.	**Male champions**	In previous peace processes, women have often been forced to **take their views to the negotiation table via men**. This has in a number of cases been a successful approach. (Zaynab, 2011)	No evidence of use

9.	Participation of women through associated mechanisms	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
10.	Targeted international training/support	The influence of women on the Doha Peace Process was largely enabled by: • Effective **advocacy and communication** strategies, which were supported by international partners • **Coalition-building** within Darfuri civil society • **Pressure from international actors** on the negotiating parties. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)	No evidence of use
11.	Transitional Justice	During the Doha Process (2009-2017) two civil society conferences were held, which were widely attended by women (exact figures are not known). The Outcome Documents from these conferences included a number of provisions relating to women including: • Calls for the review and reform of laws related to women • **Demands that perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and serious crimes such as rape were prosecuted.** • Demands that female survivors of rape **receive compensation**. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)	No evidence of use
		Non-Elite Entry Points	
12.	Mass action campaigns	Women's groups have been actively involved with community **efforts to sensitize** people on women's marginalised status since before 2011 (Zaynab, 2011) Examples: Women Empowerment for Peace and Development Network: • **Sensitizing women** about their democratic rights to encourage them to take part in decision-making; • **Analysing laws** that were discriminatory against women Nuba Women for Peace: • **Awareness raising** about peace in an effort to reconcile the rebels and the government. • Carried out through the church and church networks. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA): • Concentrated on **women's rights**. • Conducted **analysis of national laws** and	Women took a **leading role** in the 2019 **pro-democracy movement**. However, since uprisings women's participation in shaping Sudan's political landscape has been **limited** (Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux, 2019) The women's coalitions **MANSAM and No to Women's Oppression** joined the umbrella civil society group Forced for Freedom and Change, where they contributed to shaping the Declaration of Freedom and Change. This declaration laid out how Sudan would transition from military to civilian rule (Salah, 2019). **MANSAM** (a coalition of 8 political women's groups, 18 civil society organisations, youth groups, activists and academics) is currently **pushing for women's representation to reach 50% in the new government**. The

			Freedom and Change Coalition (FCC- a coalition of opposition groups, civil society groups, and the Sudanese Professional Association who were one of the main groups in the uprising) has insisted that women will be granted 40% representation. Reports suggest that the **FCC have not met the demands or needs of women to date**. (Urgent Action Fund Africa, n.d.) MANSAM was a signatory in the Declaration of Freedom and Change however they **have not been represented in any of the negotiations** with Sudan's Transitional Military Council to date (Tonneson and Al-Nagar, 2019)
		denounced those that infringed women's active participation in decision making. • Aimed to bring about a more democratic regime in Sudan where women could be equal to men. • Concerned about the war, especially in the Nuba Mountains region. • Promoted culture of peace through **awareness building** on the negative impacts of war on society. (Zaynab, 2011)	
13.	**Women's Situation Room (WSR)**	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
14.	**Women as civil society observers, advisers and delegates**	During the 2016 negotiations on the Two Areas Track, **four official civil society observers were women** who represented the **Taskforce on the Engagement of Women** ("The Women's Taskforce"). This taskforce was formed in 2013 by Sudanese female civil society and political leaders to provide a channel to the peace process. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a) **Formal Consultations:** During the All Darfur Stakeholders' Conference in 2011, women's groups and women representatives were present. **Women's rights and women's participation** were raised as necessary components of the negotiations and the implementation of the peace deal. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018) **Informal Consultations:** The Doha Process also included a number of informal consultative workshops and events either on the initiative of the Mediation or on the initiative of the Mediation Support Organisations. These workshops engaged women and covered issues such as: • **How to stop violence against women** • **How to promote human rights** • **How to protect women in IDP camps** (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018) **Public Consultations:** During the Doha Process, public hearings were held and interviews were conducted in Darfur and Khartoum. These **included representation from women's groups**. The final report that came from these hearings demanded that women comprise at least 30 percent in all delegations of the negotiating	No evidence of use

	parties. Women were also involved in the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission workshops in 2012. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018) Despite their involvement in consultations, women's meaningful participation in the Doha Process was ultimately impeded by **their lack of decision-making power** and the fact that negotiating parties were **largely indifferent to their demands.** The Doha document was never fully implemented. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)	
15. Peace Huts	Between 2014-2017, 16 women's organisations **intervened in dozens of disputes and brokered solutions between warring parties**. These solutions included building fresh water wells, assistance in drafting laws, and assistance in drafting power-sharing agreements. (Zalan, 2017) Prior to 2019, over seventy women's associations have **led resolution efforts around tribal conflicts.** A network of women from various tribes have mediated disputes between local authorities and tribal leaders. They have also mediated **peace treaties** among tribes, nomads and farmers, and displaced and host communities. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019a) **1st example of successful mediation:** In 2015, during fighting between the Barti and Zayadiya tribes, a coalition of 16 women's organisations facilitated three mediation workshops with women. During the first one they met women (and many men who also joined) from the Barti Tribe, during the second they met with women (and many men who also joined) from the Zayadiya Tribe. While the final workshop was unable to take place, the leaders of the two tribes signed an agreement on the cessation of hostilities following and partially linked to these mediation workshops. The workshops were entitled: "Mending the social fabric and the calming of tempers" **2nd example of successful mediation:** Also in 2015, during fighting between the Salamat and Fallata Tribes, this coalition of 16 women's organisations engaged local radio stations to call for peace. They highlighted that the sons of the warlords were not fighting because they were in education and asked the young men preparing to fight to reconsider and to wait for the women to arrive so that they could mediate. This led the State Government to send reinforcements to prevent clashes and caused elites from local government to initiate mediation. Reports suggest that strongly linked to the action of these women, a ceasefire agreement and a promise to hold a peace conference in order to reach a final settlement was made. Both parties eventually agreed to comply with women's plan for peace. (VOND Foundation, n.d.)	No evidence of use

16. Land and property rights, access to justice and redistribution programmes	No evidence of use	No evidence of use
17. Universal social protection and public provisioning to support gender-inclusive education and health	No evidence of use	No evidence of use

3.2 Barriers to achieving Outcome 1

Women in Sudan have faced and continue to face a variety of barriers to securing meaningful and representative participation in peace processes. These range from organisational gaps in capacity to patriarchal gender norms and security risks. These barriers are discussed below:

Organisation/ personal challenges and lack of platforms

Women and women's organisations face a number of challenges to engaging fully in decision making processes and peace negotiations which relate to organisational and personal capacity. For example, a **lack of funding to civil society organisations and women's rights organisations** limits the ability of women to mobilise, organise, produce outputs and put pressure on negotiators to involve them in decision making processes (GIS Watch, 2016). Further, **high illiteracy rates** and **exclusion from the formal economic sector** tend to reduce the ability of women to engage on an equal level to men during negotiations (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018). Reports suggest that **men tend to be more experienced in negotiations** compared to their female counterparts, having engaged in negotiations as members of or with the former ruling party (Urgent Action Fund Africa, n.d.). Thus, when decisions are made regarding who should represent parties at the negotiating table, male candidates tend to be chosen. Finally, there are **often a lack of platforms from which women activists can engage with** a wide audience. A prime example of this is the case of the ceremony of the signing of the documents outlining the transition to civilian rule, in which the only female speaker in the three hour event was the host (Agence France-Presse, 2019). The implications of limited platforms from which women's voices can be amplified is that, even as capacity gaps close, opportunities for women to engage in activism are likely to be limited.

Funding and patronage networks are likely to benefit male activists ahead of female activists. This may be because women activists are considered less legitimate by potential patrons. It may also reflect social norms and laws that forbid women and men without family ties to meet publicly, making male-female, non-family-related patronage practically challenging and socially inappropriate.

Biased selection criteria and procedures for the selection of delegates for official consultations further reflect this and limit the opportunities for women to be included in discussions and decision-making.

Closing Civil Space

Closing civil space in Sudan also limits the ability of women to engage in peace processes. Examples of closing civil space include:

- **Arrest of women activists** who talk about women's rights, democracy, sexual violence, women's participation or promoting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- **Closure of activist organisations** discussing similar topics.
- Increasing **restrictions on internet use** and social media, limiting options for mobilisation and information-sharing among women's groups and activists (GIS Watch, 2016).

> *"The restrictions on civil space and the targeting of women activists did not stop women from continuing their activism but it made it harder for them. We had to keep a low profile and develop coping mechanisms."*
>
> Asma Ismail, a youth activist who has worked with several different organizations in Sudan (Avenue et al., 2016)

Security Risks

Women also face a number of barriers relating to security. To begin, the security context in Sudan is highly volatile, **limiting women activists' ability to travel** to meetings in order to engage in peace processes (Zaynab, 2011).

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

As discussed in further detail during Section 5 of this report, VAWG poses a significant barrier to women's active participation in decision-making and peace processes in Sudan. VAWG takes many forms in this context, including but not restricted to: **harassment** by security agents (Avenue et al., 2016), often linked to women's deviation from patriarchal gender norms; and **rape and gang rape of activists** during protests (UN News, 2019).

> *"The security is reaching us inside our houses. They do not need to detain us anymore, the family members can do their jobs for them."*
>
> Female Activist, Sudan
>
> (Avenue et al., 2016)

Male-Dominated Processes

Women activists in Sudan face significant **resistance to their inclusion** in decision making and peace processes. Evidence of sexist attitudes such as that women's rightful place is in the home have been raised by both opposition and government forces. For example, the Sudan Professionals Association has made comments about women coming out to clean the streets, which was met with disapproval from female protestors and led to an apology from the SPA's female spokesperson. This reflects a wider trend in **denying women a space at negotiation tables**. Where politics is considered a "male space" the opportunities for women to engage and be heard are limited. Further, even when women's rights are being discussed, reports have identified cases where warring parties complained that provisions on empowerment and protection for women slowed the negotiation process. This shows that the **needs and concerns of women are often dismissed** in the context of Sudan's peace negotiations (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)**.**

4. What are the entry points for increasing the likelihood of this outcome being achieved moving forward?

To date, the number of entry points utilised in order to achieve Outcome 1 has been limited. This research has identified three key points of engagement for improving the likelihood of Outcome 1 being achieved. These are through: women's rights groups and mass action campaigns; peace negotiations; and focused advocacy. The following table provides recommendations and examples of best practice from Sudan itself and other contexts regarding how each area of engagement could be achieved:

Area of engagement	Recommendation and Examples of Best Practice
Supporting Women's Rights Groups and Mass Action Campaigns (Please see entry points 2, 10 and 12)	**Support Women Activists and Women's Groups in prevention, response and pursuit following gender-based harassment:** Violence against women activists is a key barrier to the achievement of Outcome 1. Even if space is made for women to engage either at the elite or non-elite level, the violence they face as a result of their participation is likely to act as a **significant deterrent for women thinking of engaging and as a barrier to those already trying to engage**. The ways that violence impacts women activists and the ways that the international community can support women to limit this violence and the impact it has are multiple. As a result, **Section 5 of this report is dedicated to engaging with these issues**. The table in section 5.3 provides a comprehensive overview of the specific violence-related barriers that women activists face and potential entry points for engaging with these. The table in section 5.3 should be treated as an extension of this table, not a secondary table**. Engaging with violence against women's activists and women in general is key to improving the likelihood that Outcome 1 is achieved** and should be a top priority for any organisations seeking to support women's activists and women's activist groups in Sudan.
	Support Women's Groups with Funding, Capacity Building and Platform Opportunities: Women's activist groups in Sudan remain **acutely underfunded**. This creates challenges in terms of covering operational costs, limiting their ability to run advocacy campaigns and putting women's activist groups in danger of closure. Many women activists draw on their personal incomes and savings to fund their campaigns. This places significant financial pressure on women and **limits the ability of women with financial constraints to participate.** Limited funding is a global concern. A report by the OECD suggests that in 2014, of gender-focused aid globally, only 8% went directly to civil society organisations (OECD, 2016). Estimates from AWID suggest the proportion that has gone to women's rights organisations in the past couple of years could be closer to 1% (AWID, 2019).

The CSSF-funded WILPF-led **"Feminist Movement for Change in Syria"** programme provides an example of how supporting women's groups with flexible funding, tailored technical support and safe spaces for networking and collaboration can contribute to achieving Outcome 1. Among other achievements, the fund was used by women's organisations to establish women's advisory boards, monitoring and evaluation tools and systems, to conduct research on gender within Syrian civil society organisations, and to produce digital material to change the perception of what it means to be a "Syrian Woman".

Many women activists also **lack experience regarding formal negotiations** both in terms of specific procedures, language and legal frameworks, which present a barrier to their engagement, and in terms of confidence to carry out particular roles. This limits their ability to contribute to peace processes, pressure governments to include them in negotiating processes, and take up responsibilities when the opportunity arises. During the Doha Process, a number of trainings were held for both conflict parties and civil society. UN Women workshops helped women activists to **formulate their claims through the language of Resolution 1325**. This enabled women activists to successfully express their concerns and demands, ensuring conflict parties were **better informed** of their position (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018). During |

the Doha Process, women activists worked with various UN entities to discuss the implementation of the UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security with officials representing various UN entities, such as UN Women and UNAMID. During this time they **requested support in their advocacy**. (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018)

Finally, women's groups and activists often **lack access to platforms** from which they can engage in advocacy with a wider audience. The UK can play a role in amplifying the voices of women activists and women's activist groups by helping identify and gain access to platforms for their messages, supporting their demands and arguing for space at the table in political contexts.

Support opportunities for alliance-building among Women's Groups and between women activists and groups and male power holders: Research suggests that by harnessing existing networks, informal and formal relationships with male powerholders, and alliances between elite women activists and organisations**, conservative opposition to women's participation can be circumvented.** (ODI, 2015). Creating coalitions and networks with decision-makers, power holders and other stakeholders in a strong position to advance women's rights and empowerment, is key to increasing the likelihood of Outcome 1 being achieved.

In the context of the Doha Process, civil society conferences were the locations in which women forged coalitions, unified their agenda, and pushed to get it included within the broader civil society agenda (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018). Supporting opportunities for women's groups to build alliances improve opportunities for collaboration, coordination, support, and joint advocacy.

Promote freedom of the internet: Many women's rights groups have used the internet as a way of **mobilising and sharing information**. However, restrictive laws and state control over internet use and social media usage poses a significant barrier to women's engagement in activism and political work (GIS Watch, 2016)

| Supporting Women's inclusion in Peace Negotiations (Please see Entry Points 1, 2, 4, 8 10 and 14) | **Support female negotiators and mediators at Elite and Non-Elite levels and promote their appointment in peace processes through advocacy:** Evidence from Sudan, suggests that where female negotiators have been active, **their impact has been substantial**. However, evidence also shows that women make up only 15% of the post-2019 negotiation delegation (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). Promoting female negotiators is one way to effectively improve the likelihood of Outcome 1 being achieved.

Evidence from Sudan shows that women have previously proved **successful in engaging in mediation at local levels** (Zalan, 2017). However, presently there are no female mediators at the national level and no evidence of women's mediation occurring at the local level. Evidence globally suggests this is emblematic of a wider trend, with only 3% of formal mediators between 1992 and 2018 being women (UN Women, 2019).

It is important to work with female negotiators and mediators to understand what support they would benefit from. This could include the provision of training, funding, access to decision makers, or placing pressure and engaging in advocacy with those who appoint mediators and negotiators to promote women's inclusion in these roles. |

Support mediators, facilitators, delegates and elites to be more gender sensitive: According to research by UN Women, appointing women as gender advisors to mediators, facilitators or delegates is one of the **most effective strategies for ensuring the inclusion of adequate gender-related provisions in the text of a peace agreement.**

	Evidence from Uganda shows that the female gender adviser to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the LRA-Affected Areas in Uganda played a part in both influencing the Special Envoy and other parties in the negotiation, and aiding women's peace activists to conduct consultations and to develop women's protocols related to each subject of the accords. (UN Women, 2012)

Evidence also suggests that at the local level, trainings run by women's activist groups have been received well by local elites and led to adaptations in approaches to negotiations and mediation (VOND Foundation, n.d.)**. This technique could be replicated at the national level and in other local contexts to build upon the work that women activists are already engaged with.

Since there are no female mediators in the post-2019 peace negotiation process, the provision of support to male mediators regarding how **to ensure gender-sensitive mediation** and to be a male champion is likely to improve the likelihood that Outcome 1 is achieved in Sudan. An example of gender-sensitive mediation guidelines can be found here: https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/1.%20English%20-GIMS.pdf |
| | **Promote engagement with women's rights groups:** During the Doha Process, there was no direct contact between women from civil society and women and men at the negotiating table. As a result, women from civil society turned to mediators and the international community to express their concerns and wishes. For example, **women-only consultations** were facilitated by mediators, which produced outcome documents with a list of recommendations from those women involved in the consultations. These were then presented to negotiating parties and wider civil society. While not all measures were included in the final agreement, reports suggest **that the international community and mediators were key** to successfully **pressuring conflict parties to include strong provisions on women's rights** in the agreement.

(Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2018) |
| Conducting Advocacy (Please see Entry Points 11, 16 and 17) | **Advocate for more equitable distribution of land rights for women**: Land rights and access to resources in Sudan are highly inequitable (Land Links, 2019). This has significant and **negative impacts on women**, and especially female-headed households, for whom access to land is key to survival and self-sufficiency. The lack of access to land rights increases financial pressure on women and so acts as a barrier to participation in political and other decision making processes, which require time and funds. Based on the research conducted for this report, issues relating to improving the **equitable distribution of land and access to resources** in Sudan have **not been included in peace negotiations**. This may be partially linked to the limited voices of women in the negotiations, who would benefit most from equitable distribution.

Thus, more equitable distribution of land rights for women is not only likely to improve the achievement of Outcome 1, it is also likely to be better tackled through the successes of Outcome 1. International pressure to include this issue in negotiations, leveraging international norms such as human rights, **may improve the likelihood of its inclusion** and the realisation of equitable resource distribution to improve opportunities for women to participate. Further pressure to include women, and especially those from rural backgrounds for whom land rights are key, in peace negotiations is likely to support the inclusion of key issues such as this. |
| | **Advocate for universal and equitable provision of social protection:** Sudan has one of the **largest number of out-of-school children** in the Middle East and North Africa region, with an estimated three million children aged 5-13 out of school and **fewer girls than boys attending school** (UNICEF, n.d.). High levels |

	of **illiteracy and limited access to services** contribute to challenges in later life for women engaging in public life and realising their rights. This poses a barrier to women's participation in political and other decision making processes.
	Research conducted for this report suggests that requirements of universal and equitable provision of social protection have not been included in the negotiation process. Leveraging international norms such as human rights, and increasing international pressure on the inclusion of **universal and equitable provision of social protection** such as **education and health care** in peace negotiations may improve the likelihood of its inclusion and its realisation, thus improving opportunities for women's political participation in future.
	Advocate for Transitional Justice provisions to be included within the negotiation process: Impunity continues to drive VAWG in Sudan and prevent women and girls from being able to **access justice** following harassment and abuse. Given that many of the acts of VAWG committed during the 2019 revolutions were from National Security Forces, ensuring that perpetrators are held to account by the new government is key to **setting expectations** regarding the **treatment of women, women activists and the relationship between women and security forces** moving forward. It is also key to ensuring that survivors and victims of VAWG are granted the justice they deserve.

5. What role does VAWG play in preventing the fulfilment of Outcome 1?

5.1 To what extent is VAWG used to try and prevent women from participating (VAWG as part of a backlash)?

Sexual Violence:

Since the 2019 revolutions in Sudan, multiple reports point to the **strategic perpetration of VAWG** as a method of preventing and discouraging women and girls from participating in activism where they demand the recognition of their right to participate fully and as equals within democratic structures. Women have been widely hailed as having led the pro-democracy protests since 2019, with an **estimated 70% of protestors being female** (BBC, 2019a). In order to instil fear into protestors and to keep the majority of protestors off the streets, what seems to have been **state-sanctioned mass rape and gang rape** of female protestors has occurred (CMI, 2019). The widespread nature of these rapes has been well documented (Avenue et al., 2019). Doctors from the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, reported **70 rape cases treated in Khartoum hospitals** following the Ramadan Massacre on June 3rd alone (CMI, 2019). Some sources suggest that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary unit that grew out of the Janjaweed militia, were responsible for many of these attacks (CMI, 2019). Reports of these attacks were circulated widely on social media despite tight restrictions on communication, **which testifies to a conscious strategy to keep women off the streets** (CMI, 2019). Within detention settings women detainees report, sexual harassment, and threats of rape used both a punishment for those women who had demonstrated and a threat to those who were considering joining (Avenue et al., 2019).

Evidence from prior to 2019 suggests that violence against women activists has been widespread for years. For example, almost all the female activists interviewed by Human Rights Watch for a 2016 report, reported that they had **experienced some form of GBV in reprisal for their activism** (Avenue et al., 2016). This ranged from rape and assault, to threats of rape, verbal harassment, and attacks on their reputation. In the vast majority of cases, the **perpetrators of abuse were national security agents or police** (ibid.). Evidence suggests that women activists in Sudan who have spoken out against Sexual Violence and harassment in the past have experienced **threats and harassment**

from members of parliament and in some cases have been arrested and detained (Avenue et al., 2016).

Non-Sexual Violence:

Non-sexual VAWG has also been used in Sudan over the past year to prevent women from engaging in political activism and activities. For example, reports from women released from detention in Khartoum suggested **high levels of non-sexual violence were used by security forces** inside the detention centres (Avenue et al., 2019). Equally, there is evidence of Rapid Support Forces and Islamist Security Officers **tearing the hijab from women**, cutting their hair and exposing them to verbal abuse and **physical violence** (CMI, 2019).

Evidence from prior to the 2019 revolutions in Sudan suggests that non-sexual violence and harassment against women activists has also been widespread for many years. This has taken many forms including, **online harassment**, shaming and threats; **attacks on women's reputations,** for example in the form of security forces spreading lies about released female detainees; **beatings** and **arbitrary detention** (Avenue et al., 2016).

These types of violence are **emblematic of techniques used globally** to prevent women human rights defenders and political activists from engaging in their work in demanding the realisation of their rights to, among others, participate in democratic processes. (OHCHR, 2019; Fraser and Ahlenback, 2019)**.**

5.2 To what extent does pre-existing VAWG prevent women from participating?

Pre-existing levels of VAWG in Sudan are high. Research suggests 48% of women in Sudan have experienced **verbal harassment** in their lifetime, 38% have experienced **physical harassment,** and 24% have experienced **domestic violence** (InfoTimes, 2019).

Evidence relating to the impact of VAWG on the prevention of women's full and equal participation in public life and decision making is strong. Evidence globally suggests that fear of violence and risks of violence **restrict women's movement to public spaces**, out of the home or to other private spaces (Action Aid, 2013). Further, evidence shows that incidents of violence against women **negatively impact women's participation in education, employment and public life** (UN Women, 2016).

Within Sudan, **restrictive public order laws reinforce already oppressive gender norms** used to justify VAWG. These laws control how women act and dress in public, enforcing strict moral codes, "designed to **exclude and intimidate women from actively participating in public life**" (SIHA and The Redress Trust, 2017). Laws of this nature have been used as a **pretence to arrest female activists** in Sudan. According to some reports, the public order regime has led many women to decide not to walk alone in the street at all in Khartoum. Fear among families for the safety of their female members and of the risk of accusations against female members that could bring shame upon the family, have led them to **discourage or forbid female family members to engage in public life** (ibid.). Laws that forbit mixed-sex meetings without family ties are also likely to also restrict opportunities for women to engage fully in public meetings or mixed-sex activist groups. Negative cultural and social perceptions of women, which are promoted by laws of this nature, **reinforce pre-existing discrimination and harassment towards women activists** (ibid.).

During the process of writing this report, one such law was repealed in Sudan (BBC, 2019b). This has been hailed as a step forward for women's rights across the country. However, the repeal of legislation is unlikely to dismantle deeply held social beliefs about the "appropriate" ways for women to behave alone. Thus we can expect that **widespread levels of VAWG will continue to limit the ability of women to fully realise their rights regarding equal participation in decision making and public life.**

5.3 How can we minimise the violent backlash against women engaging in political activism or activities and support survivors of VAWG to meaningfully participate in these areas?

There is limited evidence from Sudan itself around what works to prevent VAWG against women engaging in political activism or other activities and to support survivors of VAWG to engage in meaningful participation. As a result, this report draws on evidence from Sudan and elsewhere for recommendations about which techniques could be used. This evidence is summarised below:

Challenge	Recommendation
Prevention	
Pervasive gender norms: Gender norms contribute to the justification of and enactment of VAWG.	**Work with communities to address harmful gender norms around women's political participation and/or VAWG:** For example, in Morocco, women-led dialogue caravans have been used in four cities as convening spaces for women to engage in dialogue with imams, youth and men in the community about women's rights, violence, morality and violent extremism (Lamhaidi, 2017).
Limited financial independence for women, women activists and women's organisations:	**Flexible funding to women activists and small emerging WROs** to support them to innovate, learn and adapt to challenges, opportunities and backlash. Examples include women's funds such as Mama Cash and Frida (Young Feminists Fund). Emergency grants and support for WHRDs in immediate danger is also available provided by the Urgent Action Fund, Frontline Human Rights Defenders, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders and others (Nagarajan and Fraser, 2016).
Restrictive "Morality Laws":	**Engage in advocacy to repeal laws which seek to control women's behaviors and choices in public life or which criminalise survivors of VAWG**. In November, Sudan repealed several public order laws that had been used to control women, including laws that banned trousers, dancing, alcohol, and mixing with men who are not husbands or relatives (Oppenheim, 2019). **Advocate for laws to prevent violence against women in politics (VAWIP):** For example, in 2012, Bolivia added VAWIP to the penal code, defined as acts of "pressure, persecution, harassment, and threats" and "physical and psychosocial aggression" that impede female candidates' or female officials' ability to exercise their political rights or fulfil their public duties (Piscopo, 2016).
Provision	
Lack of monitoring mechanisms:	**Work with organisations to improve monitoring mechanisms:** Monitoring mechanisms enable women to understand where VAWG is taking place and to support survivors in the pursuit of justice. Examples of such initiatives include: The National Democratic Institute's online form for reporting violence against women in politics, which allows women and men worldwide to submit electronic reports of violence against politically active women securely and safely (Stephens and Fraser, 2018); and the UNDP and UN Women's 2015 programming guide on Violence against Women in Elections, which makes suggestions regarding indicators to measure this

| | violence such as # posts of online harassment targeting women and # postings with online harassment and bullying against women elected officials (Stephens and Fraser, 2018).

Women-led independent monitoring mechanisms: For example, in Mali, a Women's Advisory Group has been created to monitor the *Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali*, in collaboration with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families and the Office of the High Representative of the President of the Republic for the implementation of the Peace Agreement (UN Security Council, 2019). |
|---|---|
| **Lack of survivor-centered support services:** | **Fund survivor-centered support services:** For example, in Nigeria, DFID funded the establishment of Sexual Assault Referral Centres as part of the Justice for All (J4A) programme in Lagos, Enugu and Niger states. Run by women's rights organisations, the centres provide emergency medical treatment, forensic examination, counselling and assistance in accessing and negotiating the legal and judicial system (Jacobson et al., 2016).

There is a risk of re-traumatisation of women who participate in political processes aimed at addressing VAWG**. It is therefore important to identify referral pathways** for women disclosing traumatic personal experiences, particularly in relation to violence or abuse (Beyond Consultations, n.d.). For example, a toolkit for 'safe' meaningful engagement with women and women's groups in FCAS emphasises the need to clearly communicate available support services before, during and after consultations. |
| **Partnership** | |
| **Limited women's support networks:** | **Fund and support the development of support networks for female political activists**. For example, in Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon, the 3-year MENAFEM project (co-funded by CSSF and the Swedish Ministry of Affairs) provides ongoing capacity building of WROs including around security and risk management. The project has also supported WHRDs to build knowledge and skills, and linked WROs and WHRDs to national, regional and international platforms for advocacy and networking (VAWG Helpdesk, 2019).

Facilitate international sharing of lessons, including how to prevent backlash and support survivors: For example, the UK funded project Women Organising for Change in Bosnia and Syria shared lessons from women's peace activism and involvement in peace processes in Bosnia and Syria as well as drawing on experiences from Ukraine (Fraser, 2017). |

Pursuit	
Widespread impunity for perpetrators: Perpetrators of VAWG in Sudan are **often able to act with impunity**[2].	**Increase pressure from the international community to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.** This should include the provision of compensation to those who have experienced VAWG and stronger punishment to increase the risks of perpetration.
	Improve access to justice for conflict-related sexual violence through traditional justice mechanisms. For example, in Mali, the Justice, Prévention et Reconciliation (Justice Prevention and Reconciliation) (JUPREC) project has trained almost 1,400 Malian women in leadership, conflict resolution and defending the rights of victims, as well as improving access to justice for survivors of sexual violence. 28 **peace committees** have been established at district level and nearly 50,000 people have been reached through awareness raising activities on GBV. 3,000 people have benefited from legal aid (Government of Canada, 2019)

6. How can we use Elite and Non-elite entry points for Outcome 1 to address VAWG?

Recommendations for using Elite and Non-elite entry points include:

1. Advocate for the inclusion of VAWG considerations and reparations in peace accords
Research to date suggests that reference to VAWG tends to be absent from peace accords even in contexts where sexual violence against women has been employed widely as a tactic of warfare. Between 1990 and 2009 for example, only 16% of peace agreements contained at least one reference to women or gender (UN Women, 2012). While this increased to 27% since 2000 (and the adoption of resolution 1325) the number still remains low (ibid.). Further, analysis of 1,187 peace agreements between the years 1990 and 2017, shows that only 5% make reference to gender-based violence (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019b).   Between 1990 and 2009, only 4 out of 585 peace agreements included sexual violence as a ceasefire violation (UN Women, 2012). These stand in stark contrast to the fact that approximately 75% of women's concerns during peace processes have highlighted sexual violence as a significant concern (ibid.).

2. Promote the voices of local women and women's groups in peace accords
Evidence from across peace processes shows that local women and women's groups provide a strong source of suggestions on how to tackle VAWG through the accords. For example, a Women's Memorandum to the Mediation Team in Kenya in 2008 stated, "That a local gender advisor be appointed to provide the necessary expertise to the team of mediators. There is sufficient expertise within the women's movement in Kenya in the fields of gender, children's rights, women's rights, and conflict transformation," (ibid.). Further, in the 2005 Peace Process and Reconstruction in Darfur, women stated the need to "Establish a civilian police with women constituting not less than 30% of the

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[2] This was the case during and following the 2019 demonstrations as well. For example, in 2019 the Attorney-General's investigation committee in Sudan conducted an investigation into the Ramadan Massacre. It found that only 17 people were killed and that only 48 were wounded by bullets. **They found no evidence of rape or sexual violence** (Avenue et al., 2019). These findings have been widely dismissed as **inaccurate and biased**. A Sudanese lawyers association in the United Kingdom criticised the committee's report stating that it should be treated as evidence for "**obstructing justice**" by the authorities (Avenue et al., 2019).

Impunity for government security forces who rape and sexual abuse female activists has been widespread for many years, with reports of women being shamed after reporting abuse and **police threatening women if they didn't drop the charges widespread** (Avenue et al., 2016).

force. At least 30% of those recruited into the regular forces and judicial organs should be women. For purposes of admission into military academies and institutions, there should be positive discrimination in favour of the best female students from Darfur". Equally, the Women's Recommendations on Demobilisation, from the Agenda of the Uganda Women's Coalition for Peace in 2006 included the need to "protect women from gender-based violence within sites and during transport home," (ibid.).

3. Advocate for the inclusion of transitional justice mechanisms for survivors of VAWG

Transitional justice mechanisms also provide a key opportunity to address VAWG within state-building and peacebuilding processes, with several examples of success documented through DFID's What Works to Prevent VAWG research programme (2018). For example, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation included sexual and broader VAWG in the remit, with specific measures to ensure that women survivors could participate. In South Sudan, the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan established mechanisms to acknowledge and address VAWG in its Chapter 5 provisions, including a hybrid court to prosecute crimes relating to VAWG. Although the peace agreement has not been implemented at the time of the report, it is notable that women were able to successfully lobby for inclusion of mechanisms to address VAWG by coalescing into a 'women's bloc' to sign the peace agreement (DFID, 2018).

4. Work to ensure the achievement of Outcome 1

Research suggests that the same entry points recommended for improving the likelihood of Outcome 1 being achieved could be used to improve the likelihood that VAWG is addressed in peace agreements. In summary, work to support women's activists and women's activist groups, to promote the inclusion of women in decision-making positions, and to advocate on behalf of women's groups regarding their concerns around VAWG, leveraging international norms to do so, are strong entry points for engagement.

5. Promote the inclusion of women in decision-making roles

It is important to note that the presence or voices of women alone may not be enough to establish fundamental change in terms of the inclusion of VAWG prevention, provision and transitional justice in peace negotiations. The Golden Tulip Declaration of Liberian women attending the peace talks in Accra during 2003, states clearly that "women leaders who are currently observers at the Accra Peace Talks [should] be made delegates and be given voting rights" (ibid.). This reflects recognition that without decision-making power, women must rely on men in decision-making positions to include provisions on VAWG and other concerns and demands they may have. Thus, work to open up decision-making roles to women and to support women taking on those roles is of the utmost importance.

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