# SPOTLIGHT REPORT ON PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING SDGS IN SUDAN 2022

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# INTRODUCTION:

During the Millennium Development Goals process (2000-2015), civil society in Sudan was involved in evaluating the progress achieved and implementation challenges. It then participated in the UN Secretary General's consultations leading to the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, CSOs are keen to actively participate in the SDGs' follow-up, monitoring, and implementation. The question of partnership in the SDGs does not concern its set goal. It is also a prerequisite for the implementation of all goals.

Therefore, this civil society voluntary report to follow up on SDGs implementation aims to promote civil society's role, interests, and participation in Sudan to achieve the SDGs. It contains ten themes and four crosscutting topics.

Methodology:

The report relies on information collected from primary sources through a questionnaire involving 15 organizations and a focus group discussion held during a workshop at the Sudanese Development Call headquarters on June 8, 2022.

# FIRST: MAIN THEMES

## THEME ONE: GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

In 2018, a mechanism was established in the National Population Council to supervise the implementation of SDGs, where various ministries were represented. Civil society organizations also established a forum to monitor and evaluate the mechanism's performance, which was transferred from the National Population Council to the Ministry of Finance and National Economy. In addition, the states were represented in the mechanism at the governor level.

The mechanism's performance is evaluated through a report it prepares without parliamentary follow-up or evaluation. However, on April 11, 2019, the Bashir regime fell, and parliament was dissolved. According to the constitutional document that ruled the country from August 2019 until the October 25 coup, a transitional legislative council was scheduled to be established, but it did not happen.

Policy and decision-making processes on the SDGs are not based on easily accessible information and data, and there are no transparent processes to review official data. Although proposed, the Anti-Corruption Commission is yet to be formed. Nevertheless, a National Audit Bureau does exist.

There are no clear steps to ensure SDGs implementation, and the government has not developed an integrated approach to implementation.

## THEME TWO: DEVELOPMENT PLANS, STRATEGIES, AND NATIONAL BUDGET

Like many developing countries, Sudan lacks a national vision to structure plans and strategies. As a result, existing plans and strategies suffer from problems related to commitment and implementation. There also appears to be a weakness in the realistic analysis of the gap in the policy-making process.

Relative to the magnitude of actual needs, the distribution of budgets on development goals and priorities is out of balance, also related to shortcomings in studies and surveys.

In early 2021, the Ministry of Finance approved a plan to combat poverty as part of the economic reform conditions imposed on the country as part of its efforts to join the Heavily Indebted Poorest Countries (HIPC) initiative. However, progress on this issue was hampered by the coup on October 25, 2021.

## THEME THREE: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT - PUBLIC BODIES WITH CLEAR POWERS

Although a governmental mechanism exists through the national focal point on SDGs at the Finance Ministry, no specialized implementation agencies have been established. In addition, the National Population Council works on the SDGs listed in the World Population Declaration, working with the relevant government agencies.

The above demonstrated a gap in Sudan's commitment to achieving the SDGs. The implementation body has limited personnel and powers and does not live up to the level of institutional commitment to achieving the SDGs.

## THEME FOUR: IMPLEMENTING POLICIES, ACTION PLANS, AND STRATEGIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

As elaborated in the People's Scorecard report, the implementation and achievement of SDGs remain weak. In 2020, the Finance Ministry adopted the SDGs as a primary reference to prepare the budget. However, it was not reflected in practice, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on previously established plans and budgets.

## THEME FIVE: IMPLEMENTING POLICIES, ACTION PLANS, AND STRATEGIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- The report respondents believed that local governments' involvement in implementing the SGDs is limited, particularly in goals related to their urgent needs.
- They also see some harmonization according to the resources available in each state.

## THEME SIX: PUBLIC AWARENESS AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

In the context of spreading awareness, the SDGs Agenda was translated into some local languages, such as Dajo and Bedawit, by CSOs. Moreover, some educational institutions and researchers are involved, to a certain extent, in analyzing and sharing knowledge about the SDGs.

CSOs are utilizing SDGs to frame their work, and many are providing some support to capacity development on the matter.

There is an excellent opportunity for partnerships between CSOs and UN agencies, as there are specific gaps in CSOs' skills, including management, raising funds, and building partnerships.

## THEME SEVEN: MONITORING, EVALUATION, DATA, AND REPORTING MECHANISMS

There are no regular periodic monitoring and accountability reports on the SDGs. Except for voluntary non-annual reports, there is no existing monitoring process, and civil society has not been widely invited to review evidence on SDG implementation.

## THEME EIGHT: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

There are obstacles to the availability and accessibility of information to those who need it and request it. Disclosure policies are not clear or binding on the various parties. Although the constitution guarantees the right to obtain information as a fundamental right, its application is not commensurate with its status.

## THEME NINE: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Existing partnerships between the various development partners are partial and limited, where the government plays the central role. In some states, civil society initiatives created multilateral partnership platforms with the private and public sectors. Partnerships between CSOs and grassroots communities also exist. International and regional organizations are committed to partnering with national organizations. The Humanitarian Aid Commission's obligation of foreign organizations to find national partners presents an opportunity to develop civil society. Nevertheless CSO development partnerships face several challenges, mainly:

- Laws regulating voluntary work in Sudan
- The October 25 coup, restrictions on civil and political space, and the return to international isolation before the December revolution.
- Raising CSOs' capacities in line with the requirements of partnership with other parties.

## THEME TEN: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

In the transitional period from August 2019 to October 2021, the participation of citizens and their grassroots organizations grew immensely. Spaces opened up for civil society. However, with the current situation following the October 25, 2021 coup, these spaces became fewer, and citizens' participation decreased.

# SECOND: CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

## ISSUE ONE: PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST VNR

Since the last voluntary report in 2018, Sudan witnessed significant political events, namely the December revolution that changed the regime in April 2019 and the October 25, 2021 coup. During the transitional period that ended in a coup, attempts were made to overcome underdevelopment and adopt an economic reform program in cooperation with international financial and monetary institutions. However, neither the government nor civil society managed to organize reviews and performance evaluations. According to the respondents in the study, civil society was not involved or invited to any review. However, the respondents mentioned one activity held by the Forum of CSOs and funded by the UNDP.

## ISSUE TWO: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Despite the inclusion of marginalized groups in policies and plans, obstacles appeared in implementation since stakeholders were not involved in defining national priorities.

In the transitional period that was part of the past four years, marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities, and the most marginalized states) were very active in expressing their issues and demanding attention. However, no significant results were attained by groups like women and people with disabilities. On the other hand, a peace agreement was signed in the developmentally marginalized regions to address the causes of injustice and underdevelopment. However, it did not yet lead to the expected results.

In general, there does not seem to be an approach to integrating the principle of "leave no one behind" in the institutional orientation of decision-makers.

## ISSUE THREE: PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

The transitional government (2019-2021) approved the Law regarding the Supreme Council for the Environment, emphasizing the importance of the environmental issue and its intersection with all programs and activities. After being formed, it was headed by the Prime Minister and included several federal ministers and relevant authorities.

Although important environmental policies existed before, they were always poorly implemented. Despite the existing legal framework for the sustainability of natural resources, commitment to implementing them was lacking. Moreover, the concepts of sustainable consumption and production remain absent.

On the other hand, the private sector has launched initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. Other programs, such as RED, are funded and implemented by the

government through the Supreme Council of Environment and Natural Resources, responsible for coordination and monitoring implementation.

Investments in sustainable public transportation do not exist. The government runs a company in the capital, Khartoum, but it suffers from poor capabilities, coverage, and environmental commitment. Some companies run interstate travel. However, most public transport vehicles are owned by individuals, and train coverage is limited.

Sudan has large extractive industries (native gold mining). However, safety standards for workers or the environment are not applied. Profits from these industries are not used to serve local communities. Their profits are not accurately recorded in official statistics due to the impact of smuggling on the actual value. The gold extraction industry is also filled with companies affiliated with the military and security services that are not subject to the mining sector's public oversight.

## ISSUE FOUR: CIVIL SOCIETY'S CONTRIBUTION TO IMPLEMENTING THE SDGS

Civil society's awareness of the SDGs has developed. CSOs play a crucial role in their achievement, especially in light of the insufficient government budget regarding the issue. Many CSOs are actively pushing their implementation, and some have placed them at the heart of their strategic priorities. In addition, CSOs have provided effective models for participation in achieving the SDGs, such as community-managed solar water stations and initiating partnership platforms in several states with the public and private sectors.

On the other hand, CSOs face several challenges, including those related to funding. For example, following the October 25, 2021 coup, the legal environment faced a setback, civic space was narrowed, and more control was imposed on activities by the Humanitarian Aid Commission and the Security and Intelligence Service.

# CONCLUSION

Writing this report was not without difficulties and challenges. They include the lack of accurate information and weak cooperation with government agencies. Moreover, achieving the SDGs does not occupy the position it deserves in the priorities set by CSOs.

Although the report's methodology may not yield an accurate assessment, it provides general indicators that may be useful in illustrating Sudan's path toward achieving the SDGs.

The level of commitment to achieving the SDGs in Sudan is still weak and far from being achieved. Awareness and promotion of SDGs are still less than what is needed. Despite the creation of a government focal point to push for the goals through the Finance Ministry, questions remain about the extent of institutional support.

The reporting period was split between three regimes: al-Bashir's regime, the transitional period, and the coup government. Each period took a different character regarding commitment to the SDGs and partnership between development stakeholders. The transitional government was the most committed to partnering with all development parties, internally and externally, including civil society organizations.

On the other hand, CSOs still need to exert more effort in cooperation and coordination to develop their capabilities and become qualified for appropriate partnerships in the development framework.