

Al-nisa', artaqauu! – Women, Rise Up!

Empowering Sudanese Women in South Kordofan to Advance Women's Rights

The women of Sudan remain one of the most marginalized groups in the country even though they make up half of the population, and play vital roles in both the labor force and family sphere. Women continue to be victims of human rights violations, displacement as well as low social and economic status that is heightened as a result of constant conflict and instabilities throughout the country. These challenges, in addition to traditional and social norms, create great obstacles in achieving equal access to and control of resources and financial services that ultimately lead to women's empowerment.



South Kordofan state

From January 2018 to December 2019, Search for Common Ground (Search) in partnership with the European Union and Badya Centre for Integrated Development (Badya) implemented a project to empower women in the Sudanese state of South Kordofan, specifically around Kadugli, Dalanj, Alqoz and Habila.

Through a range of leadership, educational & community-building activities, the project sought to achieve the following objectives:

- I. Increasing the capacity and confidence of Sudanese women from IDP and host communities in South Kordofan to advocate for their rights;
- II. Strengthening communities' support for the protection and promotion of the rights of Sudanese women from IDP and host communities in South Kordofan;
- III. Increasing the economic self-reliance of women from IDP and host communities in South Kordofan.

KEY PROJECT RESULTS

Challenging Negative Perceptions of Women

59% of community stakeholders including community, political and religious authorities report that as a result of the project they now take women and their views into consideration during decision making, and 35% report that they understand concepts and terms related to women's rights. Compared to the baseline indicator where only 28% of community stakeholders were able to give an example of including women in their decision making, we can see a huge shift in the perceptions of community leaders in the targeted areas. This change is important to highlight, considering the weight of influence these stakeholders have within the community;

it allows for a new generation of local leaders who are not only aware of women's rights and issues, but are also willing to take women and their views into consideration in decision-making.

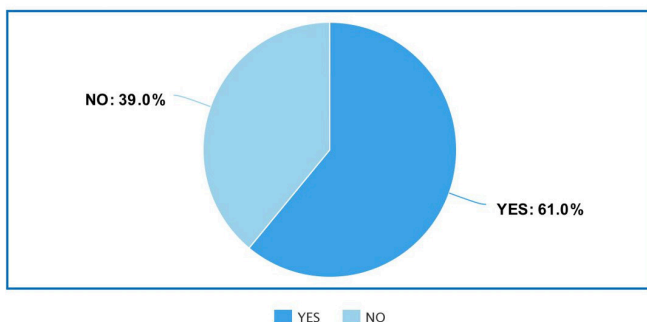


Increasing Opportunities and Confidence

82% of women respondents reported **increased confidence** in advocating for women's rights and gender equality. This marks a 75% increase compared to the baseline, which could be directly attributed to the program's activities such as the women leadership and advocacy training.

84% of women respondents positively affirmed that they have **increased opportunities** to advocate for gender equality. This key development can be attributed to the project's "women coffee for peace ceremonies", which provided women from the community with an opportunity to safely discuss and advocate for women's issues. A link could also be drawn to the increase in women's confidence that allows them to create safe spaces where other women in their communities can similarly have the opportunity to speak up and advocate.

Did the skills of women in IDP and host communities to advocate for women's rights and gender equality increase?



Sustaining Financial Empowerment

The women-led livelihood activities survey revealed that 37% of the women participants are now able to finance themselves long term as a result of the project, yet 27% of the beneficiaries foresee this ability to be limited in time, due to inflation in the market, the high increase of prices and seasonal changes. The biggest impediment to the sustainability of financial support is the constantly rising prices in Sudan, which in turn affects both men and women's activities and their ability to maintain or grow their businesses.

Feeling Empowered

Overall, 75% of women in target communities report having improved access to social, economic or political rights as a result of the project, with some of the women stating that they are now able to support their families as a direct result of the project, and others stating that they are now in a better position to provide benefits for those in need in their community. Developing educational and interactive activities such as the women coffee ceremonies, radio programs and women-led livelihood activities supported the women in feeling empowered.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- Increase efforts to raise awareness on women's rights in the communities;
- Support financial-empowerment activities to increase the economic stability of women;
- Increase capacity-building efforts and training to provide women with long-term skills, especially relating to finance for economic empowerment;
- Establish mechanisms for the protection of women's legal and financial rights;
- Support the formation of a network of organizations and governmental officials to monitor women's rights issues and address them as they occur.