

# The State of Mutual Aid in Sudan

Grassroots  
Humanitarian Action,  
Challenges, and  
Pathways Forward



Crisis  
Coordination  
Unit Sudan

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Nagi Musa prepared this report for the *Crisis Coordination Unit – Sudan* ([sudanunit.com](http://sudanunit.com)). The findings and recommendations represent independent analysis informed by field research and qualitative and quantitative data collected from grassroots humanitarian initiatives across Sudan.

A profound acknowledgement is made to the hundreds of volunteers, local leaders, and members of Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), mutual aid groups and Civil Society Organisations (CBOs) whose lived experiences and insights form the core of this research. Their courage, resilience, and willingness to share complex operational realities are the foundation of this analysis and its pathways forward.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of partner organisations. All efforts have been made to protect participants' safety and privacy; names, locations, and identifying details have been anonymised.

Permission to use quotes or findings should be directed to the author via the *Crisis Coordination Unit*.

*Crisis Coordination Unit – Sudan* operates as a field coordination and humanitarian analysis unit with a mandate to support local and international responses amidst the ongoing crisis.

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# Key Findings and Operational Recommendations (Summary)

The war that erupted in Sudan on 15 April 2023 followed a decade of grassroots movement-building characterised by youth-led, decentralised networks of trust and horizontal organisation. When the state collapsed, and international humanitarian access became severely restricted, these local initiatives—both pre-existing and newly formed—became the primary providers of humanitarian assistance for millions of Sudanese, delivering food aid, health services, evacuations, and psychosocial support whilst preserving social cohesion. This study examines how these grassroots initiatives understand their humanitarian role and envision their future, identifies their needs and constraints to develop more responsive support, and advances the hypothesis that these trust-based networks constitute a foundational pillar of Sudan’s resilience and any future recovery approach.

## Main Findings

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1. **Localised Complexity:** The humanitarian operating environment is fragmented and non-standardised, characterised by extreme localised variations, especially in Darfur and Kordofan.
2. **Fragile Legitimacy:** Grassroots networks are the primary providers of aid, deriving their strength from deep community trust and legitimacy, but a lack of sustainable financial and organisational support threatens their work.
3. **External Pressures on Organisation:** The push for formal registration and organisational change is often a response to security risks and donor requirements (“forced institutionalisation”), rather than an internal, strategic choice by the groups themselves.
4. **Critical Infrastructure:** Digital connectivity has become essential for life and coordination, making widespread digital isolation a critical operational and protection risk.
5. **Pathways to Sustainability:** Long-term viability requires moving beyond reliance on short-term cash and unpaid volunteerism by adopting hybrid models, community-linked productive cooperatives, and strategic support from intermediary civil society organisations.

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# Impact Story: Resilience and Innovation in Localised Response

Across Sudan's conflict zones, grassroots groups have transitioned into a sophisticated frontline for humanitarian delivery. In Nyala, South Darfur, volunteers navigate a "digital frontline" to keep operations running. Because telecommunications are non-existent, local teams coordinate "door-to-door" to organise aid distributions and meetings. To share data with international partners, they rely on commercial Starlink hubs for 2,000 SDG per hour. However, due to the high risk of surveillance in public shops, these groups leverage trust-based partnerships with national organisations to access private satellite internet for sensitive coordination, ensuring both operational continuity and volunteer safety.

In the relatively stable areas of Kassala and Northern State, localised efforts have evolved from emergency relief to sustainable livelihood restoration. A collaboration between the Women's Emergency Room and Youth Agricultural Rooms led to an initiative to train displaced women in urban farming. By providing tools and technical training, the project transformed beneficiaries from "subjects" waiting for handouts into active producers. This shift has restored a sense of agency and leadership among displaced women, allowing them to control their own destinies by securing food for their families and generating surplus income in a collapsed economy.

In South Kordofan, youth-led Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) have become the primary lifeline for essential services. In one notable initiative, local volunteers in the Al-Dabab (Al-Dibabat) locality used micro-grants to repair and restore six neighbourhood schools, ensuring children could continue their education despite the surrounding instability. Beyond education, these groups have successfully established mobile communal kitchens and organised local health camps to provide medical screenings and food to thousands of displaced families who were otherwise cut off from international aid.

Despite the withdrawal of major international agencies, these groups persist through horizontal, community-led structures. When international funding for gender-based protection ceased in the East, local women's emergency rooms integrated these services directly into Takayas (communal kitchens) in their neighbourhoods. By embedding protection within food security programs, they have created a self-sustaining model of mutual aid that ensures the most vulnerable women are not only fed but are protected from the systemic risks of displacement—proving that local responders are not merely "filling gaps" but are leading the humanitarian strategy.

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# Introduction

The war that erupted on 15 April 2023 unfolded against the backdrop of profound social and political transformations that Sudan had experienced over the preceding decade. During this period, a broad grassroots social movement emerged, led primarily by youth and characterised by decentralisation, broad geographic reach, and the ability to transcend ethnic, regional, and political boundaries.

This movement was not transient or episodic. It generated dense networks of trust, social relations, and accumulated social capital, enabling communities to develop effective horizontal forms of organisation. These structures responded directly to popular demands and played a meaningful role in reshaping Sudan's political and social landscape. Sudanese universities were central to this process. They functioned not only as institutions of academic learning but as spaces for producing solidarity and collective action. Student unions organised fundraising campaigns, medical convoys, and community support initiatives, drawing on the deep trust local communities placed in these young actors—many of whom represented the first educated generation in their areas.

Over time, this spirit of collective action extended beyond universities into neighbourhood squares, mosques, churches, and informal youth gathering spaces. It gave rise to a broad societal movement grounded in participation, collective responsibility, and solidarity. This decentralised, horizontal, and community-owned movement constituted a key driver of the political change that Sudan witnessed. However, the transitional period following the fall of the Al-Bashir regime exposed a growing disconnect between political elites and grassroots constituencies. As elites increasingly relied on exclusionary political solutions and negotiations with military actors, the political process became more fragile, paving the way for the coup and, ultimately, the outbreak of war.

With the onset of war in April 2023, the significance of this grassroots movement became evident in unprecedented ways. In the absence of the state and amid severe restrictions on international humanitarian access due to violence, insecurity, and the collapse of infrastructure, local initiatives—both long-standing and newly formed—became the primary providers of humanitarian assistance to millions of Sudanese. While some pre-existing groups continued their work, others emerged during the first days and weeks of the war. All relied on a shared organisational legacy rooted in trust-based networks and decentralised voluntary action.

This horizontal approach proved critical to sustaining daily life. Grassroots initiatives provided food assistance, operated health centres, organised evacuation efforts, delivered psychosocial support, and contributed to protecting social cohesion in neighbourhoods, displacement sites, and rural areas. As such, these initiatives have come to embody what contemporary humanitarian literature describes

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as “localised humanitarian response” or “everyday humanitarianism” in conflict settings—responses that originate within communities themselves and operate through flexible, adaptive networks that fill institutional voids.

Local solidarity networks also played a vital role in preserving social cohesion and preventing societal collapse. This experience aligns with peacebuilding and social transformation theories (Lederach, Galtung), which emphasise that communities with strong trust networks and active social capital demonstrate greater resilience during crises and stronger recovery capacities thereafter. Sudan’s current experience clearly illustrates this reality. These decentralised groups are not merely voluntary efforts; they represent a parallel humanitarian and community support system that sustained life and mitigated the effects of institutional breakdown.

This study examined how these grassroots initiatives understand their current humanitarian role and envision the future of their work amid prolonged, intersecting challenges. It also aims to identify the concrete needs, structural gaps, and organisational constraints facing these initiatives, with the aim of developing more responsive, flexible, and context-appropriate forms of support. In doing so, the study advances the hypothesis that grassroots initiatives—by virtue of their trust-based networks and horizontal modes of organisation—constitute a foundational pillar of societal resilience in Sudan, and a central element that must be built upon in any future approach to recovery and reconstruction.

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# Methodology

**This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research tools to examine the realities of grassroots humanitarian initiatives and emergency response rooms in Sudan. The methodology is designed to capture both operational patterns and deeper organisational dynamics, including challenges, needs, and visions for the future. It is structured around three core components: a survey, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, complemented by qualitative monitoring of the digital space and a triangulation process to enhance data reliability.**

## 1. Survey Instrument

A semi-structured survey was developed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data across a range of variables related to grassroots initiatives' work. These variables included communication and coordination patterns, funding and transfer mechanisms, volume of activities and number of volunteers, quality of services provided, existing partnerships, key challenges and needs, and future aspirations.

### **Survey Sample:**

A total of 80 responses were collected from grassroots initiatives operating across multiple states in Sudan. Following data verification and quality checks, 72 responses were retained as the final research sample. These responses covered 13 central states, providing a robust dataset reflecting general trends and needs among grassroots actors.

### **The geographic distribution included:**

- The five Darfur states (North, South, West, Central, and East Darfur)
- North and South Kordofan
- Eastern states (Kassala and Gedaref)
- Central and northern states (Khartoum, Blue Nile, White Nile, and River Nile)

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## Data Collection:

The survey was distributed through secure communication channels and in coordination with trusted local networks to ensure participant safety. It combined closed-ended questions with open-ended prompts to capture detailed narratives alongside quantitative indicators.

## 2. In-Depth Interviews

Five in-depth interviews were conducted with key local actors operating inside Sudan, with a particular focus on highly fragile contexts, including parts of Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile, and eastern Sudan. Interview topics covered daily operational challenges, security and logistical constraints, resource mobilisation strategies, coordination gaps between states, inclusion of women and persons with disabilities, decision-making processes, relationships with local communities and national and international civil society organisations, and perspectives on the future of grassroots work.

These interviews provided insights into internal dynamics and contextual variations that are not readily captured through survey data alone. They enabled a deeper understanding of regional disparities.

## 3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Two focus group discussions were conducted with local humanitarian actors. Participants included initiatives operating in areas under the Sudanese Armed Forces' control and others working in areas under the Rapid Support Forces' control.

Both focus groups explored participants' self-perceptions, coordination mechanisms between initiatives, operational environments, protection-related challenges, and funding and transfer dynamics. FGDs facilitated the collection of collective narratives and enabled the identification of points of convergence and divergence among groups. They also highlighted significant variations across regions, including differences between states and even between localities within the same area of control.

## 4. Triangulation

A triangulation approach was employed to enhance the credibility of the findings. This process integrated data from the survey (72 valid responses), five in-depth interviews, two focus group

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discussions, and qualitative digital space monitoring. Preliminary findings were also shared with actors from the Local Coordination Council (LCC), discussed collectively, and refined based on their feedback. This iterative process helped identify regional disparities and address potential gaps in interpretation.

## 5. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards, including protecting participants' privacy, avoiding the identification of sensitive locations or individuals, and using secure communication channels. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and data related to protection and gender were handled with particular sensitivity to avoid exposing local actors to harm.

## 6. Limitations of the Study

Despite multiple methods used to enhance data validation, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. Data collection relied on secure communication channels and trusted local networks, which may have limited access to initiatives operating in high-risk environments or without stable internet connectivity. Prolonged internet outages across large parts of Sudan, and reliance on limited access points—particularly those linked to Starlink services—made it challenging to reach initiatives operating quietly or within closed community networks such as tribal or family structures.

Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data, which may introduce biases, including overreporting successes and underreporting challenges. While cross-verification through interviews and FGDs helped mitigate this risk, such bias remains inherent in self-reporting methodologies. Finally, although the sample size is relatively large given the wartime context, Sudan's geographic and cultural diversity limits the possibility of strict statistical generalisation. The findings are therefore presented as strong field-based indicators rather than universally generalisable measures.

## 7. Rationale for Excluding a Formal Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a field-driven analytical approach to generate practical knowledge applicable to humanitarian programming and support for grassroots initiatives in Sudan. Given the fluid, fragmented, and high-risk operating environment—marked by multiple de facto authorities and institutional collapse—the inclusion of a conventional theoretical

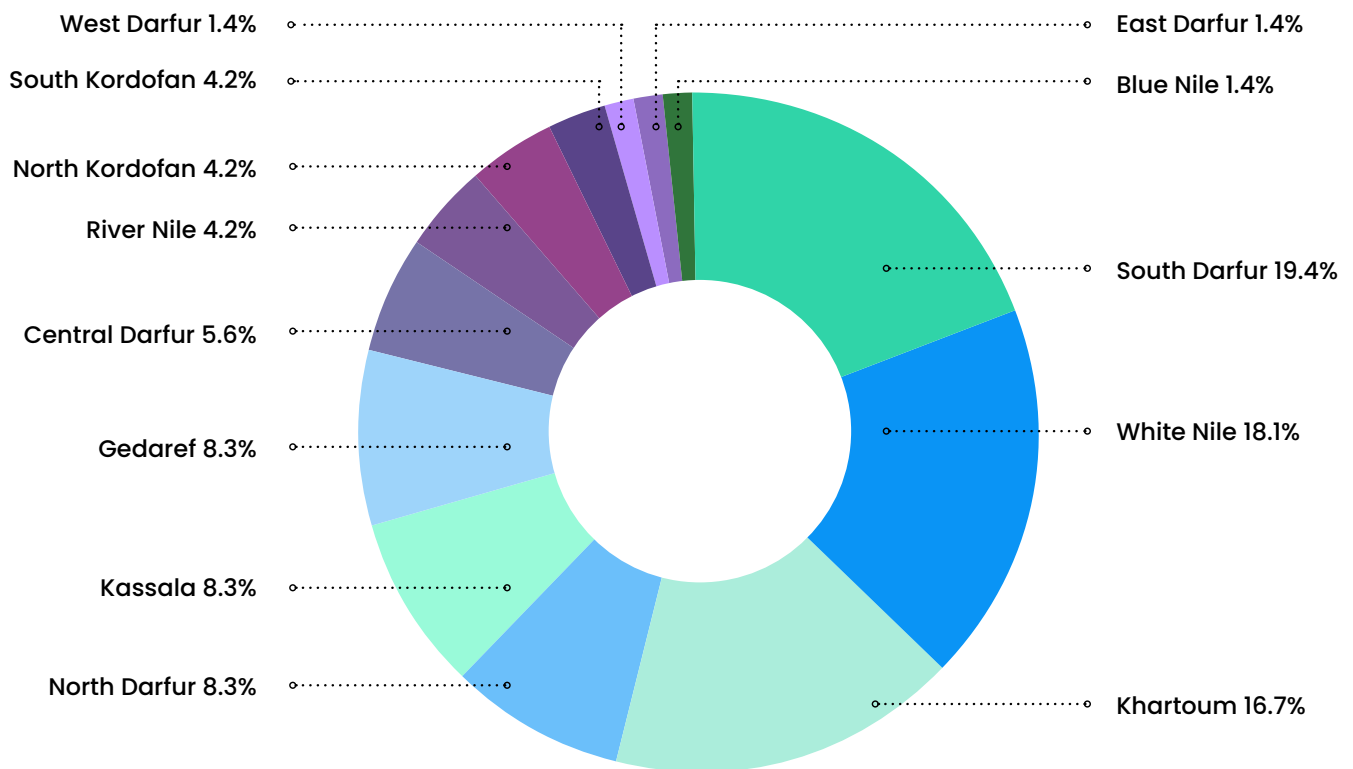
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framework or extensive literature review was unlikely to add substantive analytical value. Instead, the study prioritises knowledge produced from within the context itself, grounded in the lived experiences of grassroots actors and informed by survey data, FGDs, and in-depth interviews. This approach aligns with grounded analysis methodologies, where theory emerges inductively from empirical realities rather than being imposed through predefined analytical models.

# Quantitative Findings

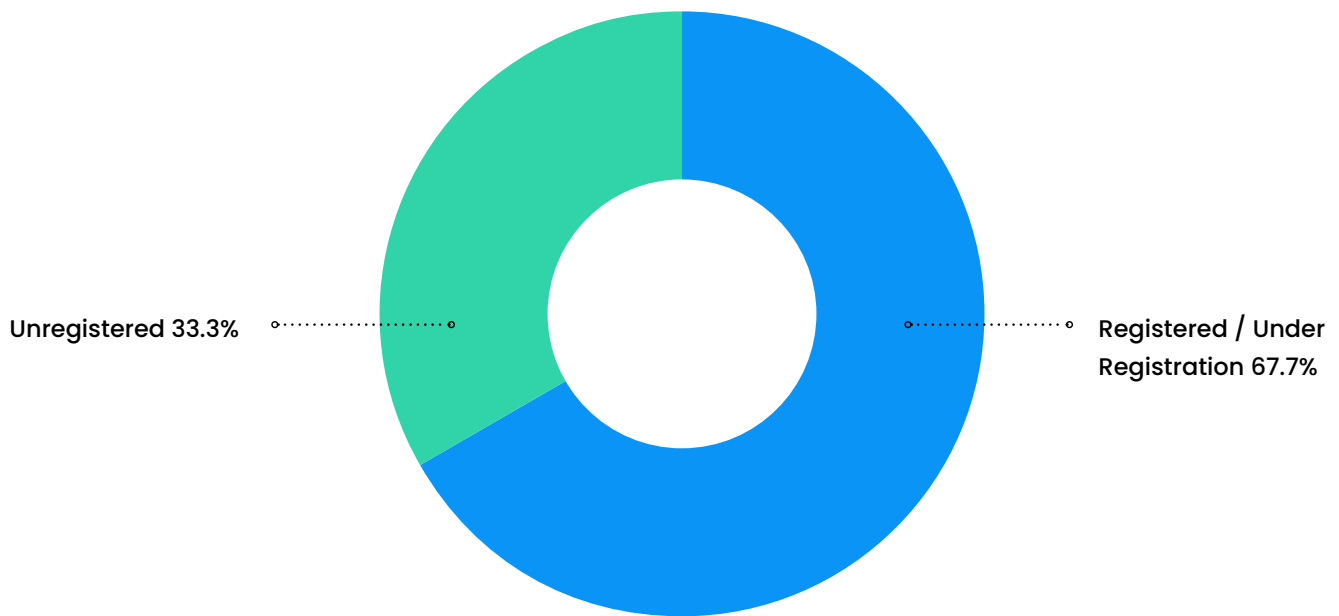
This section presents the analysis of 72 valid survey responses, following data cleaning and the exclusion of suspicious entries from White Nile State, to ensure the highest possible levels of data quality and reliability.

## 1. Geographic Distribution of Initiatives



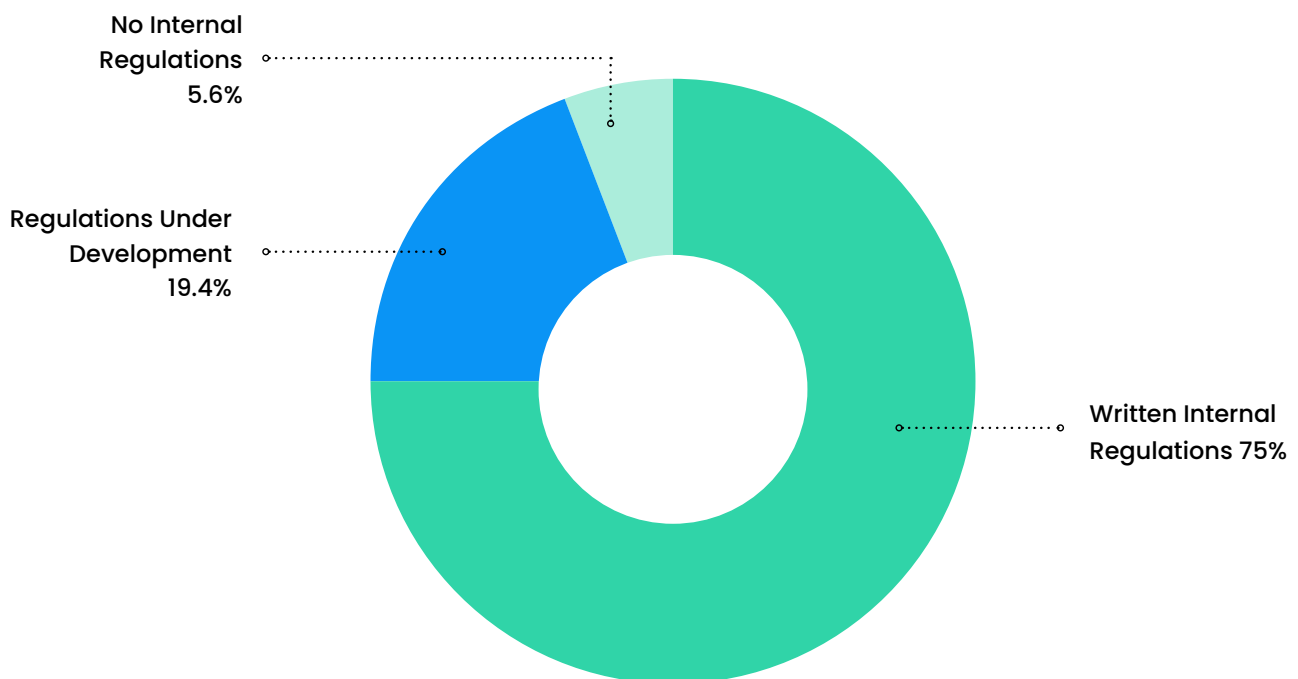
Grassroots initiatives are most concentrated in areas experiencing direct conflict and in key transit states. These figures should be understood as indicative rather than exhaustive, reflecting the study's scope as a snapshot of current dynamics rather than comprehensive nationwide coverage.

## 2. Legal Status of Groups



Approximately two-thirds of surveyed groups operate with some form of legal status, which facilitates partnerships, access to funding, and capacity-building opportunities. At the same time, a significant proportion continue to operate outside formal registration frameworks.

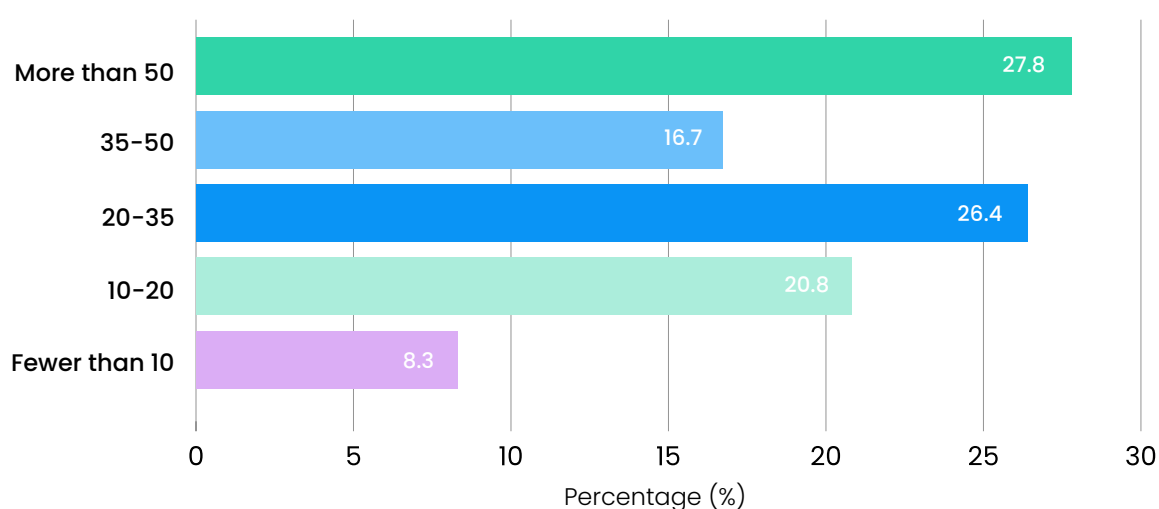
## 3. Internal Governance and Organisational Structures



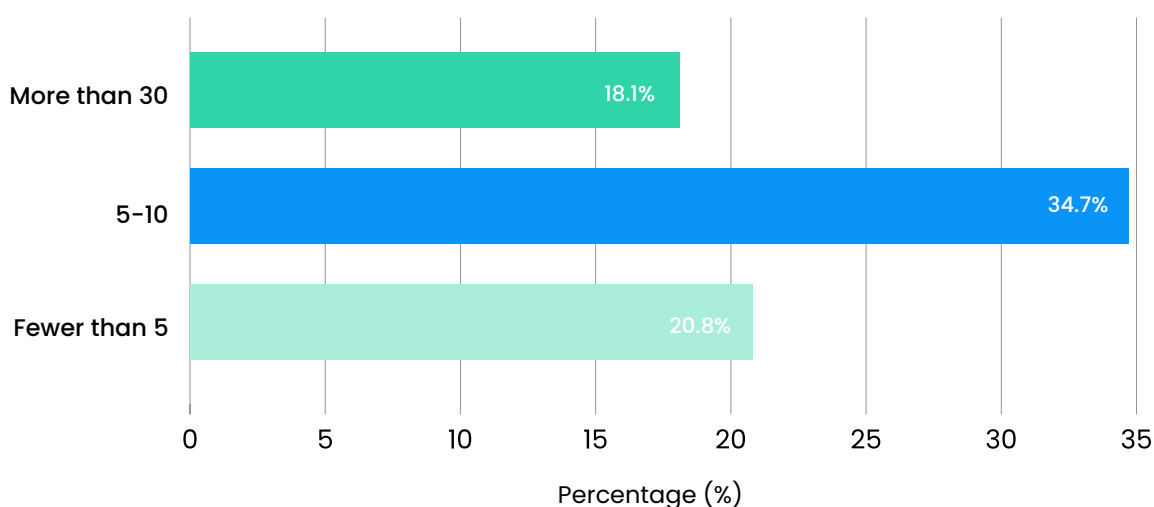
Although many groups—particularly newer initiatives—rely on relatively simple governance systems, the presence of internal regulations reflects a clear orientation toward institutional development and organised practice. This challenges common assumptions that grassroots initiatives are merely spontaneous or informal, as a growing number demonstrate evolving governance frameworks and operational procedures.

## 4. Volume of Volunteers and Semi-Full-Time Staff

**Number of Active Volunteers (Figure A):**

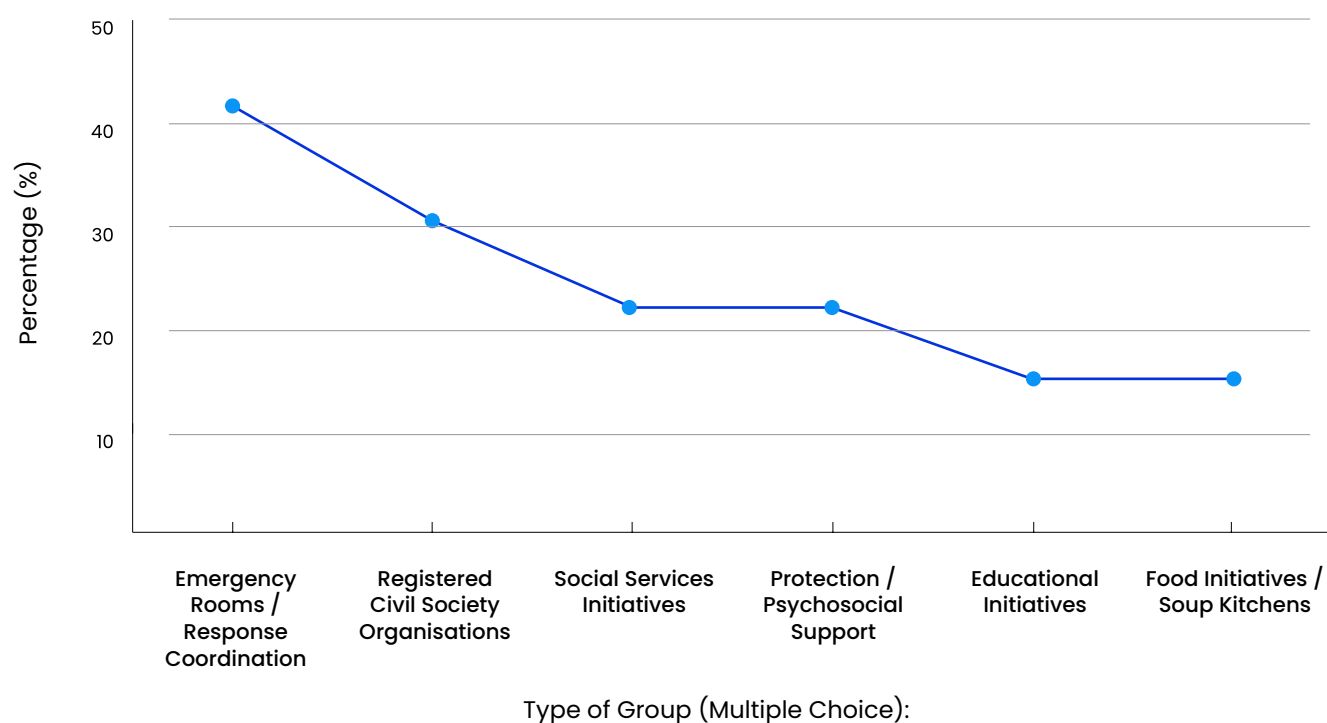


**Semi-Full-Time Staff (Figure B):**



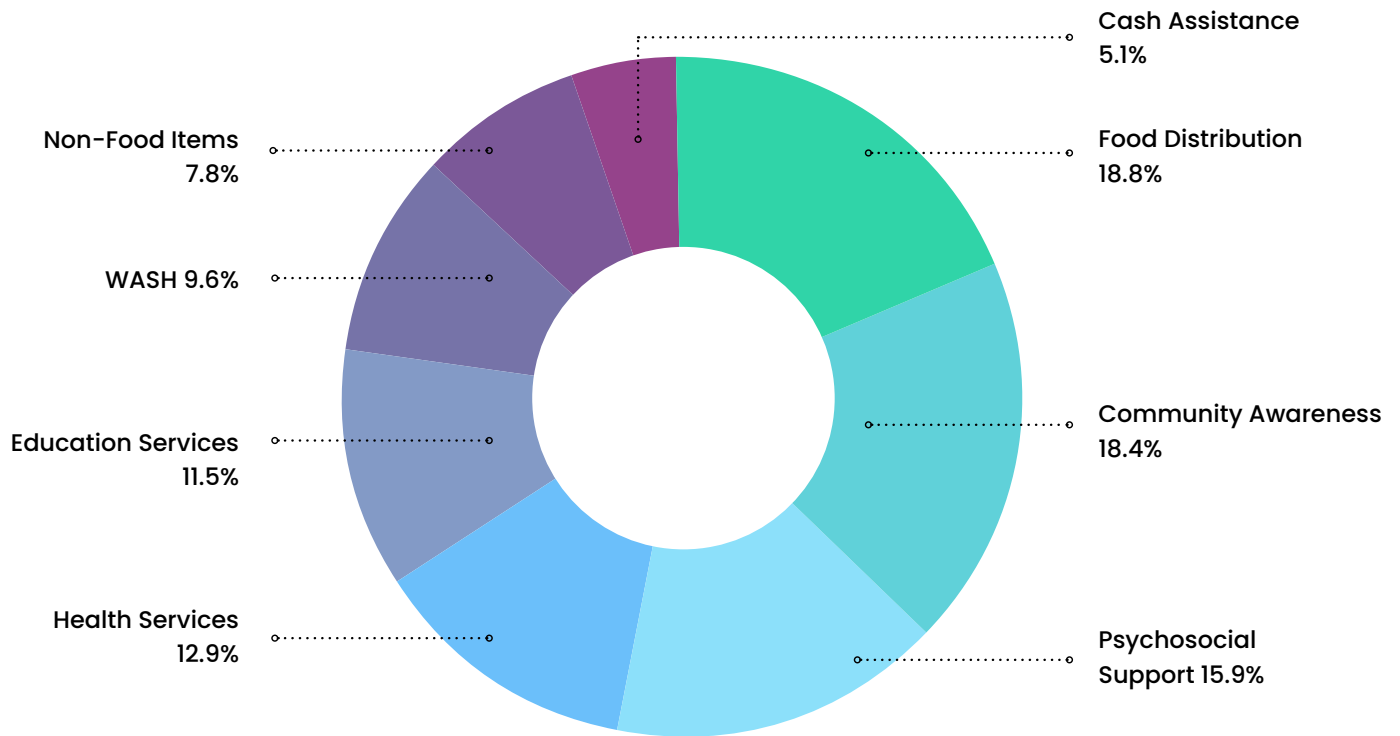
The findings indicate that many initiatives possess a genuine operational core, extending beyond ad hoc or transient volunteerism. This core contributes to organisational continuity and expansion, driven by individuals with sustained commitment to the group’s mission. While the survey did not assess whether such dedication is remunerated, subsequent qualitative findings highlight paid engagement as a key factor influencing sustainability. This dynamic also intersects with challenges related to prolonged volunteerism and potential tensions arising from paid roles and internal power relations.

## 5. Types of Groups and Fields of Intervention



The data reflects the hybrid nature of many grassroots initiatives. Several groups have pursued registration or contributed to the creation of legally registered entities, while continuing to operate through horizontal grassroots structures under different names. As further explored in the qualitative analysis, this hybridity is shaped by security conditions, donor requirements, and the availability of support for specific organisational forms.

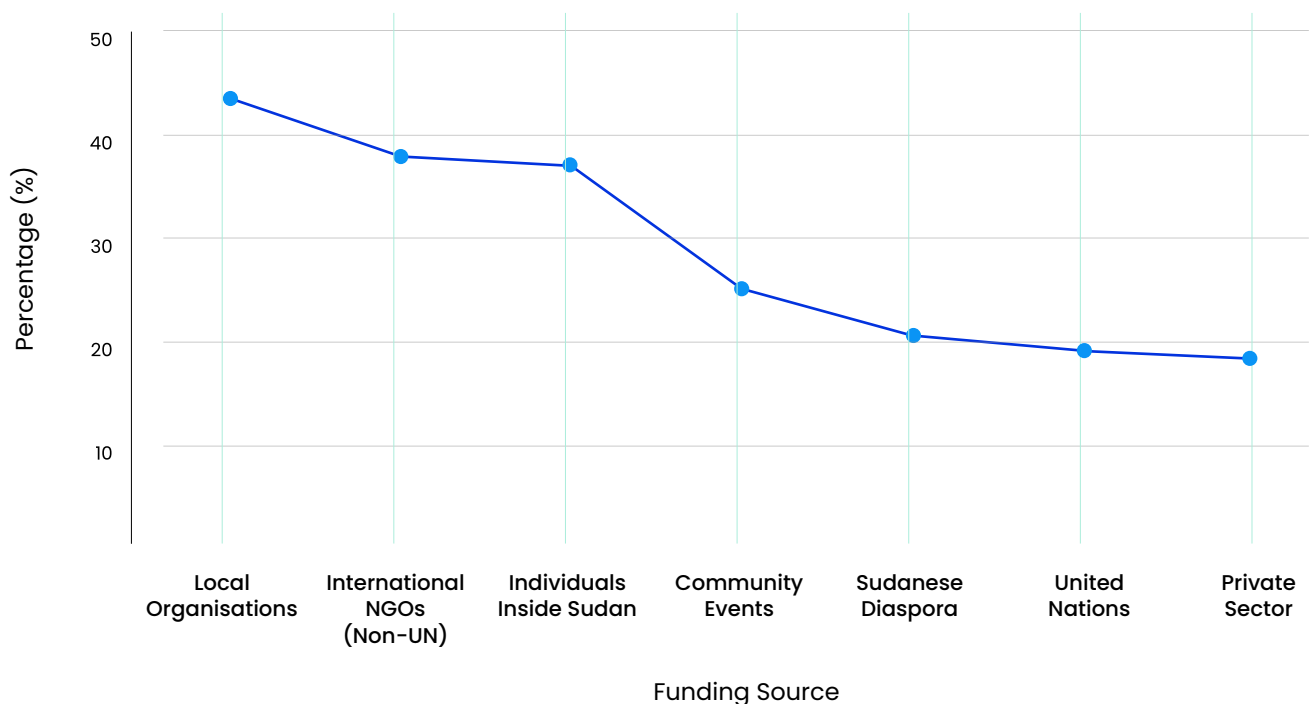
### Primary Activities (Figure 7):



These findings indicate that grassroots initiatives effectively perform the functions of an alternative humanitarian system in contexts where state institutions and international agencies are absent or unable to operate.

## 6. Sources of Funding

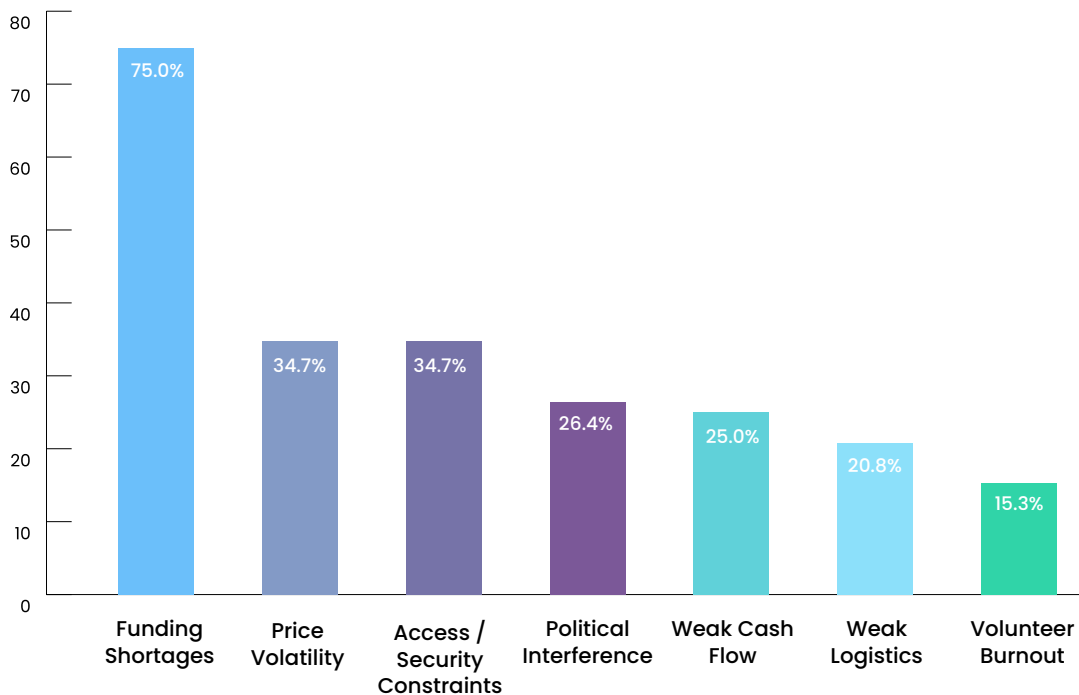
### Primary Funding Sources (Figure 8):



Local funding plays a central role, serving as a strong indicator of community legitimacy and trust. At the same time, these patterns point to limited access to international funding mechanisms, despite the scale of available resources within the global humanitarian system.

## 7. Operational Challenges

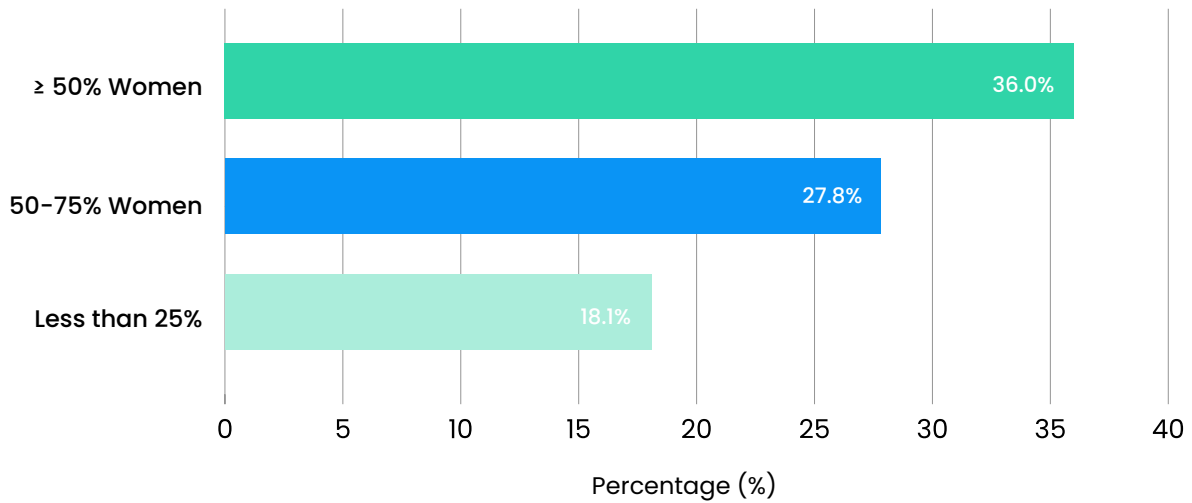
Primary Challenges (Figure 9):



Funding shortages represent the most significant challenge. Additionally, approximately one-third of initiatives face serious access and movement constraints, which helps explain the reliance on volunteers drawn largely from the same localities in which groups operate, enabling life-saving activities despite restricted mobility.

## 8. Women's Participation in Leadership

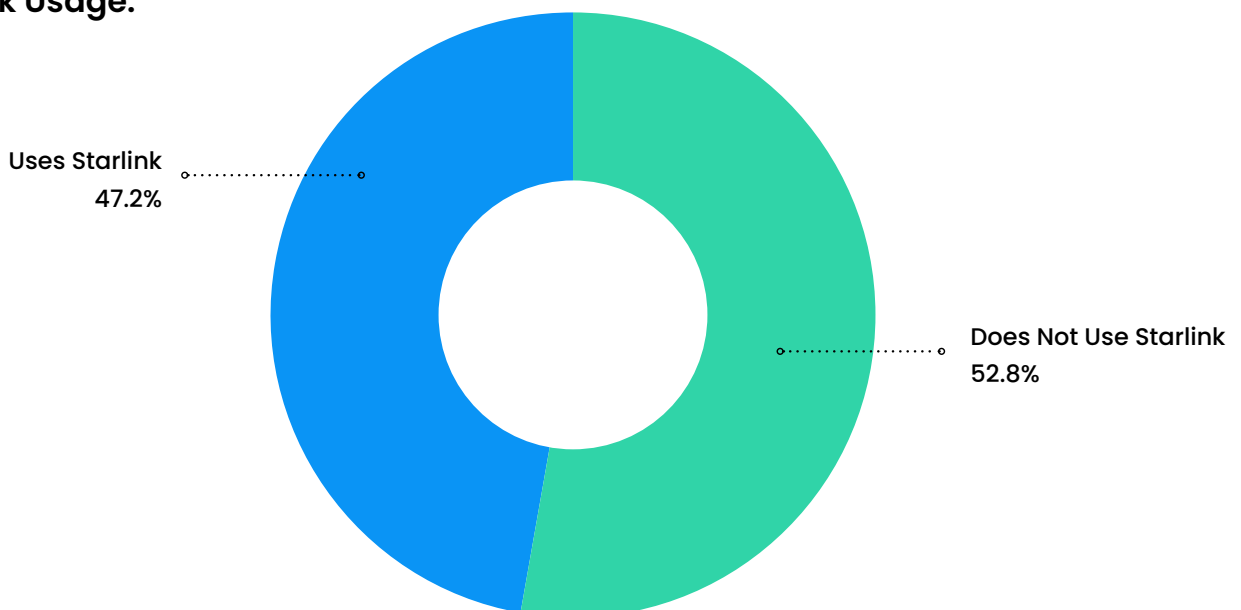
### Percentage of Women in Management:



Approximately three out of ten initiatives are largely led by women, reflecting a strong presence of gender-inclusive leadership and peace-oriented values within grassroots humanitarian work. This finding is particularly significant in Sudan's patriarchal context and amid a conflict environment in which violence against women has been systematically employed.

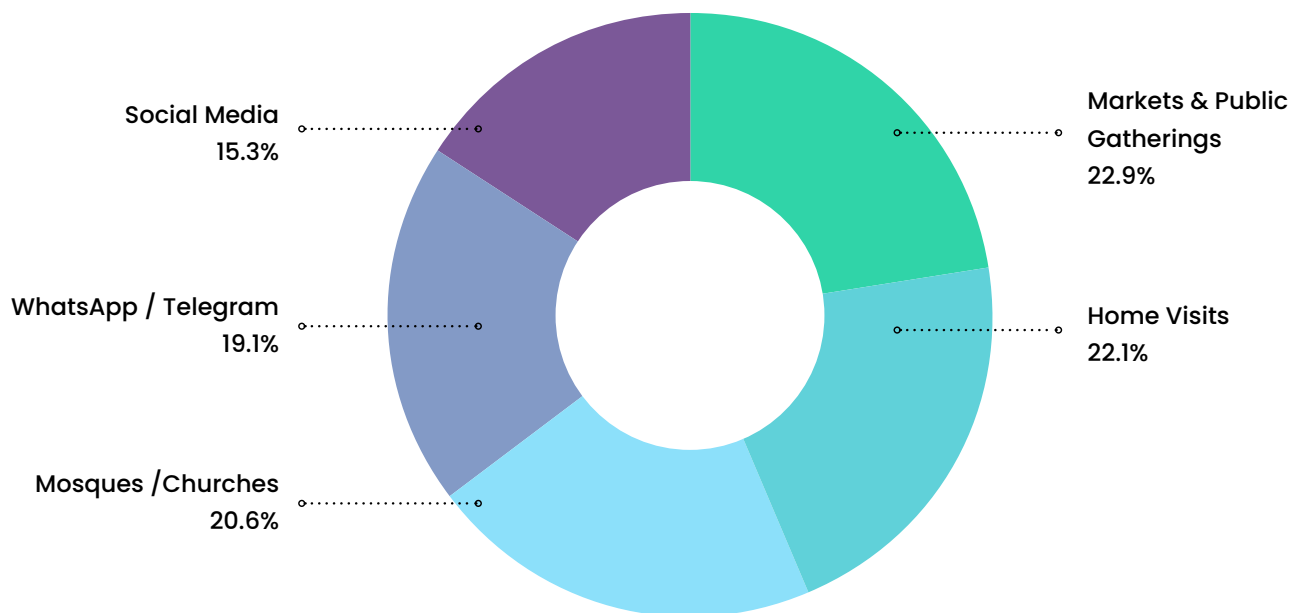
## 9. Technology and Connectivity

### Starlink Usage:



Even in the absence of conventional telecommunications infrastructure, many initiatives actively seek alternative connectivity solutions, underscoring the centrality of communication for operational continuity and coordination.

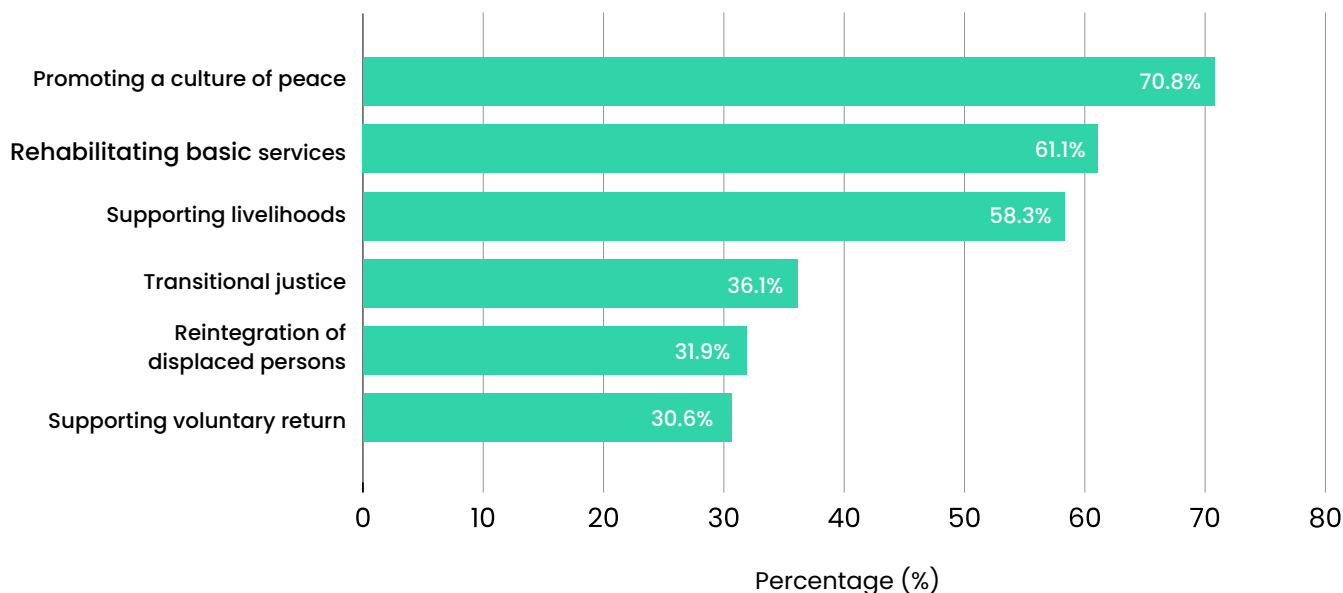
### Primary Communication Channels with Communities:



Community legitimacy is built primarily through sustained, direct engagement in everyday social spaces, rather than through digital communication alone.

## 10. Future Vision After the War

### Perceived Roles Following the Cessation of Hostilities:



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Most initiatives envision their future role primarily in peacebuilding, reflecting their deep community embeddedness and origins in pre-war grassroots mobilisation. At the same time, they recognise an important role in service rehabilitation and reconstruction. This perspective underscores the acute awareness of the social polarisation and regional and ethnic mobilisation generated by the war, highlighting the need for sustained peacebuilding, coexistence, and transitional justice.

## 11. Cross-Variable Insights

### A. Communication Patterns and Community Legitimacy:

Groups operating primarily in open community spaces—such as markets and through home visits—demonstrate higher reliance on volunteers and stronger engagement in local networks, indicating higher levels of community acceptance and legitimacy.

### B. Geographic Disparities:

- Darfur: the highest levels of risk alongside the strongest operational capacity
- White Nile: a hybrid profile combining formal and grassroots structures with strong female representation
- Eastern states: greater focus on education and health
- Khartoum: initiatives operating in a “post-trauma” context shaped by displacement

### C. Founding Year and Organisational Maturity:

Groups established before 2020 exhibit higher levels of governance, legitimacy, and partnership development. Newer groups (2023–2024) tend to operate primarily through emergency response logics.

### D. Training and Capacity:

Increased access to training correlates with expansion in activities, higher female participation, stronger partnerships, and improved financial capacity.

### E. Gender and Type of Activity:

Initiatives with high female representation ( $\geq 50\%$ ) are more likely to engage in protection, psychosocial support, education, and livelihoods programming. In contrast, those with lower female representation tend to focus on food distribution and service delivery under high-pressure conditions. This pattern reflects women’s stronger engagement in protection-oriented and livelihood-focused work.

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# Qualitative Findings

## The Security and Political Context and Its Impact on Group Capacity

### Eastern, Central, and Northern Sudan (SAF-Controlled Areas)

Differences in military control and the presence of multiple de facto authorities are primary determinants of the effectiveness, mobility, and survival of grassroots humanitarian groups. Each region operates under distinct local orders and security realities that shape the scope, form, and limits of grassroots action.

### Gezira State

In Gezira, a faction of the Juba Peace Agreement signatories aligned with the SAF (commonly referred to as “The Alliance”) wields dominant influence, frequently bypassing the Governor’s authority. These forces have actively positioned themselves as the primary humanitarian actors, seeking to monopolise aid delivery to legitimise their political and military presence.

In Gezira State, the dynamics of protection have shifted significantly. While the security apparatus has intensified its focus on identifying ‘collaborators’ and monitoring returnees, the relative safety of certain civil actors is not merely a byproduct of this shifted focus. Instead, it is rooted in deep-seated social immunity.

Participants highlighted that protection in Gezira often depends on family standing and community leadership. Civil actors belonging to well-known families enjoy a layer of social protection that security forces are hesitant to breach. When detentions occur, community leaders often intervene successfully to secure releases. Thus, protection is less about a relaxation of security grip and more about the effectiveness of traditional social mediation mechanisms in shielding local sons and daughters from state targeting.

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## Khartoum State

In Khartoum State, the restriction of grassroots humanitarian space has been driven by specific state-level directives rather than solely federal HAC policy. The Khartoum State Government issued a decree prohibiting voluntary work without prior coordination and registration with state authorities.<sup>1</sup> This local order has been the primary legal instrument used to pressure Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) to register with the state's Humanitarian Aid Commission or to cease operations.

Participants reported that this state-level directive is enforced through local administrative units and security checkpoints, where volunteers are frequently questioned about their compliance with the Governor's decree. Parallel structures, such as 'Dignity Committees' (Lijan al-Karama), are being promoted by state authorities as the sanctioned alternative for channelling aid, effectively criminalising independent grassroots work that operates outside this state-imposed framework.

## Darfur and Kordofan: Complexity Beyond the "Army vs. RSF" Binary

Reducing Darfur and Kordofan to a binary distinction between "SAF-controlled" and "RSF-controlled" areas constitutes a misleading simplification. In reality, these regions are characterised by extreme fragmentation, with multiple de facto authorities exercising overlapping and sometimes contradictory control over humanitarian action.

## Regional Variation

Discussions with actors operating in SAF-controlled areas indicate that each state applies its own regulatory and security framework governing humanitarian activity. Some states facilitate limited civic action, while others impose severe restrictions. Kassala State emerges as the most permissive environment, in contrast to the River Nile, Gadarif, and Red Sea States, where regulations are significantly tighter, and the Northern State, where constraints are moderate. Governance of public space is highly personalised and contingent on the discretion—and often the "mood"—of security and administrative officials.

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<sup>1</sup> Khartoum State Government, "Decree on Voluntary Work," via *Ultra Sudan*.

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## **The Return of Popular Committees:**

Khartoum has also witnessed the reactivation of former ‘Popular Committee’ structures, effectively sidelining the ‘Change and Services Committees’ that emerged during the transitional period. Although these Change Committees were not formally elected, they enjoyed widespread support from local communities and Resistance Committees, who viewed them as the legitimate alternative to the corrupt, security-linked bodies of the former National Congress Party (NCP) regime.

However, current authorities have actively moved to dissolve these revolutionary bodies, replacing them with state-appointed ‘Steering Committees’ (Lijan Tayseer) under the pretext of removing political bias. This restructuring reinforces the authorities’ tendency to view Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) as political extensions of this revolutionary infrastructure, explaining the systematic efforts to curtail their funding and operational space.

## **Community Protection:**

Despite mounting challenges, community support continues to provide a vital layer of protection for activists in areas like East Nile and Bahri. Participants emphasised that the difficulty security forces face in targeting these activists is directly linked to the social backing they receive.

This protection is rooted in a profound sense of legitimacy born of abandonment. When government structures collapsed, and the RSF took over, mutual aid groups were the only actors left to serve the people. Because they stood by their communities when the state failed them, communities are now actively standing by them, resisting attempts by returning SAF authorities to target or dismantle the very structures that ensured their survival.

## **Administrative Closure of Civic Space**

A key constraint identified was the gradual “closure of space” through administrative mechanisms. Obtaining permits has become a prolonged and opaque process, heavily dependent on personal relationships and the discretionary authority

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<sup>2</sup> *Asharq Al-Awsat*, “Why is the Sudanese government pursuing ‘Services and Change Committees?’” January 22, 2024. <https://aawsat.com/node/4806736>.

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## Sensitivity of Terminology and Administrative Procedures

of military actors. Participants described HAC “procedural offices” staffed by intelligence representatives as mandatory bottlenecks in the approval process.

### **Terminology:**

Language itself has become a site of risk. Terms such as «feminist» are highly sensitive in several states due to their association with justice and equality discourses. As a result, women-led groups frequently substitute such terminology with more neutral labels—such as «women’s initiatives»—to avoid restriction. Similar sensitivities apply to organisational identity: the term «Emergency Room» is widely perceived as politically charged, prompting groups to adopt socially neutral titles (e.g., «Youth Initiative» or «Charity») to bypass security rejection.

### **Registration:**

Groups are increasingly required to obtain national-level registration, as state-level registration is no longer considered sufficient. This process entails travel to Port Sudan, extensive security vetting, and prolonged waiting periods. Participants stressed that the move toward registration is often a forced adaptation to a tightening administrative environment that renders unregistered work untenable, rather than an expression of voluntary institutional maturation.

## Patterns of Civil Management:

### Indigenous Legitimacy And Native Administration (Rsf-Controlled Areas)

In parts of Darfur and Kordofan, the RSF delegates civil administration to native authorities while concentrating on security and taxation. While this creates a complex negotiation landscape for outsiders, it makes a distinct operational advantage for local mutual aid groups. Being indigenous to these communities, these groups leverage deep pre-existing trust and social capital with Native Administration leaders to secure operational space that is often denied to international actors.

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However, this space remains fragile and fraught with uncertainty. Groups frequently face security threats from autonomous RSF local commanders. In such critical moments, the protection mechanism relies on community leaders—who hold political arrangements with the RSF—to intervene and shield local activists. Thus, humanitarian access in these areas is not a guaranteed right, but a continuous, high-risk exercise in community mediation.

### **Movement-Based Bureaucracy (Transitional Council – Tasis Alliance – Pro-RSF):**

In areas such as Korma, humanitarian work is organised through structures like the ‘Secretariat of Humanitarian Affairs.’ This body is not a neutral administrative entity but a direct continuation of the NGO ‘Tarada,’ operating under the umbrella of the Tasis Alliance (a pro-RSF faction).

This evolution highlights a seamless integration between political/military leadership and humanitarian management. The Secretariat exercises extensive control over access and coordination, effectively functioning as the alliance’s governance arm rather than an independent civil society actor.

### **Centralised Control (SLM–Abdul Wahid):**

In Jebel Marra and the newly controlled area of Tawila, humanitarian operations are governed by a highly centralised system under the Sudan Liberation Relief Commission (SLRC). Unlike the decentralised models seen elsewhere, access here functions as an assertion of sovereignty, requiring rigid registration and direct engagement with the movement’s leadership to obtain travel permits.

Participants consistently reported a disconnect between political rhetoric and field reality. While high-level leadership publicly announces exemptions for humanitarian aid, field commanders frequently impose ‘convoy fees’ or administrative levies, particularly in Tawila. These measures are often justified locally as security protocols to prevent RSF infiltration. Yet, they transform humanitarian access into a complex, pay-to-play system that contradicts the movement’s official sta

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### Personalised Access (Musa Hilal-Influenced Areas):

In areas such as Misteriha (مستريحة), access is governed almost entirely through personal or tribal mediation, with no consistent regulatory framework.

### Joint Forces (Minnawi/Jibril- Pro SAF):

Although the Joint Forces have lost control of El Fasher, they retain authority over a few localities in North Darfur and operate in close coordination with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). In these remaining strongholds, humanitarian activity does not follow a standardised bureaucratic process. Still, it proceeds based on informal understandings negotiated directly with military commanders. This reliance on personal negotiation rather than institutional procedure makes access highly variable and dependent on the individual disposition of local commanders.

### SPLM-N (Al-Hilu -Tasis Alliance – Pro-RSF):

It is important to note that this study did not include direct participants from areas controlled by the SPLM-N (Al-Hilu); findings here rely on secondary accounts from actors connected to the region. These sources describe an environment defined by decades of entrenched conflict, which has produced a highly sophisticated security and intelligence apparatus.

In Blue Nile (Yabous), South Kordofan (Nuba Mountains), humanitarian activity is not open. Still, it is strictly managed under what amounts to ‘counter-intelligence’ oversight. The movement relies on a closed, trusted network of affiliated civil society actors and institutions to distribute aid. This structure ensures that aid delivery is tightly coupled with the movement’s political legitimacy and sovereignty, effectively excluding actors who fall outside this vetted circle.

### Hard Security Control (SAF):

In locations such as El Obeid and parts of the Eastern Nuba Mountains, the operational landscape is defined by a sharp tension between civil administration and the security apparatus. While participants noted that the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in El Obeid has attempted to play a positive, facilitating role, its influence is frequently overshadowed by a dominant ‘Security Cell’ and by armed actors under SAF command.

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These security actors continue to view local humanitarian action with deep suspicion, particularly regarding the influx of IDPs seeking shelter from RSF-controlled areas. Rather than treating these arrivals as a humanitarian priority, security forces often view them through a lens of potential infiltration. Consequently, mutual aid groups attempting to support these populations face accusations of collaboration. They are frequently blocked from operating, effectively penalising aid to those displaced from RSF territory.

To bypass these blockages and avoid legal risks, mutual aid groups have adopted a 'proxy distribution' strategy. Participants revealed that they often channel aid through trusted local business people and wealthy community notables. Unlike youth activists who are viewed with suspicion, these established figures possess a level of social capital and perceived neutrality that allows them to access restricted IDP sites without triggering a security response. Thus, aid reaches the most vulnerable not through direct activist engagement, but through the protective cover of local elites.

## Operational Conclusion

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No unified humanitarian operating environment exists. Any intervention premised on a single access model or a "one-size-fits-all" local partner is likely to fail. Effective engagement requires highly contextualised, flexible partnerships that can adapt to shifting authority structures. As fragmentation deepens, the importance of grassroots groups capable of maintaining cross-conflict and cross-community relationships continues to grow.

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# Adaptation to Digital Isolation: From Technology to Human Connection

Digital space has ceased to function as a neutral operational tool and has become a high-risk environment.

## Human Relays

In areas experiencing communication blackouts, groups replaced digital coordination with human intermediaries who physically relay information regarding meetings and activities.

## Restricted Connectivity Protocols

In cities such as Nyala, groups limit internet usage to brief daily sessions at Starlink access points, prioritizing essential coordination while minimizing exposure.

## Forced Digital Isolation

Communication in SAF-controlled areas, particularly in Kordofan, is heavily weaponized. Participants from El Obeid reported a direct correlation between military escalation and

This creates a recurring pattern of total isolation during critical security moments. With WhatsApp calls disabled all across Sudan and internet access severed, communities in El Obeid and other semi-besieged cities are forced to rely on traditional SMS and phone calls—which are often monitored or unreliable—to access life-saving information. This enforced darkness not only renders external communication and visual documentation exceptionally risky but effectively traps the population in an information vacuum exactly when they are most vulnerable to attack.

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## Legitimacy and Community Relations

Legitimacy has shifted away from formal legal status toward what participants described as “legitimacy of achievement” and “legitimacy of belonging.”

## The Decline of Elitism (Kassala Model)

Traditional NGO actors were often perceived as socially distant elites. By contrast, the current generation of volunteers “looks like the community” and speaks its language, breaking down class barriers and facilitating collective mobilisation.

## The Neighbourhood as a Protective Anchor

Neighbourhoods have become the primary unit of protection. Groups deeply embedded in their communities reported receiving respect and protection—even from military actors—due to strong popular backing. In Darfur, reliance on tribal and family structures similarly facilitates continued operation.

## The Volunteerism Dilemma

Economic collapse has driven a shift from pure volunteerism toward forms of “paid volunteerism.” Some leaders now require incentives to sustain engagement, generating internal tensions between paid leadership—often supported through INGO projects—and unpaid frontline volunteers. This dynamic contributes to internal fragmentation, brain drain, and high turnover.

## The Funding Trap

International funding models that impose complex organisational structures without providing adequate operational budgets place volunteers in ethically and financially untenable positions. The absence of a legitimised model for compensated volunteerism poses a serious threat to the continuity of grassroots civic movements.

## Internal Organisational Dynamics

### From Horizontal to Pragmatic Verticality

“The exigencies of war have forced a structural shift within many groups. While originally founded on horizontal, democratic principles, groups are increasingly adopting ‘pragmatic verticality.’ This shift is not ideological but operational: war conditions demand faster decision-making and the designation of specific, identifiable interlocutors to navigate complex negotiations with authorities and donors. Efficiency and security are effectively prioritising hierarchy over consensus.”

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## Regional Disparities

The organisational maturity and structure of groups are heavily dictated by their local security context, creating three distinct operational realities:

**Kassala (The Incubator):** Functions as a relatively permissive environment where youth groups receive regular training and engagement. Consequently, groups here exhibit high levels of organisational awareness and administrative capacity.

**River Nile (The Constrictor):** Presents a deeply restrictive security environment where the very terminology of humanitarian work is securitised. Participants noted that even the label 'Emergency Response Room' has become politically sensitive, forcing groups to operate under low-profile cover to avoid being targeted.

**Darfur (The Survivalist):** In RSF-controlled zones, organisational dynamics are defined by embedded survival. Unlike the formalising trends seen in the East, groups here are forced to embed themselves deeply within tribal and community structures to secure protection. Organisational development is often secondary to the daily struggle of maintaining the delicate social negotiations required to operate amidst active conflict.

## Forced Institutionalisation:

Across all regions, the push toward formal registration should not be misinterpreted as a natural trajectory of institutional growth. Instead, it emerges as a coerced adaptation. Groups are registering not to professionalise, but to build a legal defensive shield against an increasingly tightening operating environment that increasingly criminalises informal aid.

## Women's Roles and Gender Transformations

Women emerge not only as primary caregivers but as central actors in adaptation strategies, navigating a "double burden" of care and systemic exclusion.

**Darfur:** In high-risk contexts like El Fasher and Tawila, women-led initiatives have become the primary mechanism for documenting sexual violence. With formal reporting channels collapsed, groups like the Women's Emergency Room (formerly Amal Initiative) rely on oral networks and discreet home-based reporting to protect survivors. Notably, the study found a pattern of "Identity Coercion," where women's unions were forced to rebrand as "Emergency Rooms" solely to access donor funding that excludes traditional civil society structures.

**Kordofan:** In West Kordofan, women transformed pre-war empowerment programs into survival economics. Small business initiatives (e.g., food processing) function as critical protection

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mechanisms, preventing destitution and sexual exploitation. However, this resilience faces targeted bureaucratic violence: participants in West Kordofan reported a ban on renewing their registrations for months, forcing them to navigate complex federal security clearances in Port Sudan.

**Eastern Sudan:** In Kassala, a distinct “City vs. Locality” divide has emerged. While Kassala City hosts a robust, well-trained Women’s Emergency Room that actively coordinates with the state, efforts to replicate this model in rural localities have stalled due to the withdrawal of international partners (e.g., DT Global). Consequently, women’s humanitarian infrastructure remains concentrated in the urban centre, leaving rural areas served only by traditional, male-dominated structures.

## Common Challenges and Adaptation Mechanisms

### Key Challenges:

- Centralised and restrictive registration processes (Port Sudan)
- High financial transfer fees (10–20%)
- Digital surveillance risks, particularly at Starlink access points
- Volunteer attrition driven by economic pressure
- Governance gaps, including limited internal accountability mechanisms

### Adaptation Mechanisms:

- Camouflage Naming: Registering under neutral charitable titles to bypass security scrutiny
- Social Cover: Relying on community leaders and dignitaries for protection
- Sustainability Strategies: Increasing reliance on productive cooperatives (e.g., solar energy, agriculture) to support both communities and volunteers while reducing dependence on cash incentives
- Legal Networks: Building support networks to respond collectively to arrests and legal threats

## Digital Space Analysis — Between Legitimacy and Exploitation Mechanisms

Qualitative monitoring of Facebook and WhatsApp reveals the digital space as a central arena where legitimacy, access, and risk are continuously negotiated. Far from being neutral tools, digital platforms have become integral to grassroots humanitarian action while simultaneously exposing groups to new forms of vulnerability and exploitation.

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## 1. Inflation of Appeals and Weak Verification

The digital space is saturated with emotionally charged humanitarian appeals that often lack adequate documentation or verification mechanisms. While these appeals frequently reflect genuine humanitarian need, the absence of basic governance standards renders the space vulnerable to misuse and exploitation. This dynamic ultimately undermines the credibility and legitimacy of authentic grassroots initiatives that operate transparently and accountably.

## 2. Emergence of Local Funding Platforms

The appearance of local grant mechanisms, such as the Sudan Humanitarian and Development Fund (SHDF), reflects a significant vacuum left by international donors. These initiatives signal local attempts to fill funding gaps; however, they also raise critical questions regarding governance, accountability, and the concentration of decision-making power in the absence of state oversight.

## 3. Digital Impersonation and Disinformation

Multiple cases of digital impersonation were identified, including fake pages falsely representing established Emergency Response Rooms (e.g., Dar Hamar ERR). These pages have disseminated disinformation and, in some instances, accused civilians of collaboration. Such practices demonstrate that legitimacy has acquired a digital dimension—»digital legitimacy»—and that its manipulation poses direct risks to communal cohesion, individual safety, and social peace.

## 4. The Visibility Gap and Power Asymmetries

Grassroots-generated content faces a structural bottleneck: despite producing high-value, context-rich information, it receives limited engagement unless amplified by major regional platforms such as Al-Hadath or Al-Jazeera. This dependency reveals a profound power asymmetry, in which narrative visibility is not determined by the quality of the information but by access to distribution channels.

Critically, these large media actors are rarely neutral conduits. They are often externally funded or politically affiliated with specific armed actors and their regional backers. Consequently, they function as partisan gatekeepers, selectively amplifying grassroots narratives that align with their sponsors' political agendas while suppressing those that contradict them. This dynamic leaves independent grassroots groups—who lack their own mass distribution capacity—at the mercy of a polarised media landscape that instrumentalises their suffering for political capital.

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## 5. Expansion of Digital Roles

Digital engagement has evolved beyond fundraising appeals into more integrated forms of response, including solar energy campaigns, agricultural initiatives, and systematic documentation of violations. This expansion aligns with broader field-level trends toward sustainable, multi-sectoral interventions. It reflects the adaptive capacity of grassroots actors in leveraging digital tools under constrained conditions.

## 6. The Digital Divide: Connectivity, Class, and Historical Marginalisation

An analysis of Sudan's digital space reveals that "online public opinion" is heavily skewed by geography, class, and historical access to resources. The digital narrative is not a demographic reflection of the crisis but a reflection of privilege.

### 1. Internal Disparities: Functioning Networks vs. Total Blackout

Access within Sudan is defined by military control. In most SAF-controlled areas, telecommunication companies continue to function, providing relatively stable internet access. The exception lies in active conflict zones like El Obeid and parts of Kordofan, where authorities implement tactical internet shutdowns during active fighting.

In stark contrast, RSF-controlled areas face a total telecommunications blackout. Here, populations are entirely severed from national networks, relying solely on Starlink satellite services available only in commercial hubs. This access is severely limited by cost, fear of security monitoring, and a scarcity of skilled cadres capable of documenting and uploading information. Consequently, vast rural areas remain 'digital dark spots,' where atrocities occur in total silence.

### 2. The Exile Divide: The "Loud" Diaspora vs. The Silenced Refugees

External engagement is equally stratified. The dominant voices in social media discussions are primarily Sudanese in Egypt and the Gulf states—groups often possessing historical access to education, financial safety nets, and stable connectivity. They drive the political agenda and online discourse.

Conversely, refugees in Chad, South Sudan, and camps in Uganda and Ethiopia are largely absent from this digital sphere. These populations often hail from historically marginalised communities with lower rates of formal education and fragile financial networks. Unlike their counterparts in the Gulf, they lack the 'safety nets' to receive remittances or the resources to maintain consistent connectivity. Their absence from social media distorts the national narrative: the communities most affected by displacement and historical neglect are the least heard in the corridors of digital advocacy.

## Operational Implication:

Donors and analysts must recognise that the ‘Sudanese voice’ found on social media platforms is a subset of the population. It excludes both the besieged communities inside RSF zones and the marginalised refugee populations in neighbouring African states. Policy decisions based solely on digital sentiment analysis will inevitably overlook the needs and perspectives of the most vulnerable, historically marginalised groups.

## Section Conclusion

The digital space has evolved into a critical, yet highly stratified, extension of local governance and humanitarian coordination. However, it functions as a double-edged sword. While it amplifies the voices of the connected diaspora and secure zones, it simultaneously obscures the reality of the disconnected majority in besieged and refugee settings.

Consequently, digital disinformation and impersonation are not merely technical nuisances but direct threats to physical safety and social cohesion. Adequate support must therefore go beyond simple verification; it requires a dual strategy. Partners must invest in digital protection mechanisms for those online, while simultaneously developing offline communication bridges to ensure that aid and advocacy do not remain hostage to the ‘connectivity divide.’

## Structural Findings: Challenges, Dilemmas, and Pathways to Viability

- 1. There is no unified humanitarian operating environment in Sudan.** Access mechanisms, risk profiles, and patterns of control differ not only between areas controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), but also significantly within each zone of control itself. Humanitarian access is shaped by highly localised arrangements, power dynamics, and informal practices that defy standardised operational assumptions.
- 2. Community legitimacy is the primary source of protection and access, yet it remains fragile.** Grassroots initiatives derive their ability to operate primarily from deep social trust and embeddedness within their communities. However, the absence of sustainable financial and organisational support models threatens the continuity of this work, despite its demonstrated social strength and acceptance.
- 3. “Forced institutionalisation” has emerged as an imposed trajectory rather than an organisational choice.** Formal registration does not necessarily indicate institutional

maturity or strategic development. In many cases, it reflects adaptation to security pressures, administrative constraints, and donor requirements, rather than an internally driven process of organisational growth.

4. **Connectivity has become a critical infrastructure for both life and humanitarian action.** Digital isolation restricts access to funding, coordination, information-sharing, and psychosocial support, while simultaneously increasing operational and protection risks for grassroots actors operating in fragmented and insecure environments.
5. **Darfur and Kordofan represent the highest levels of operational complexity.** The multiplicity of de facto authorities, overlapping systems of control, and shifting local power arrangements render any unified access model ineffective and, in some cases, dangerous for local actors.
6. **Grassroots groups are engaged in deep internal dialogues regarding self-definition and future pathways.** The findings reveal sustained internal debates around identity: whether groups should remain temporary initiatives, evolve into service-oriented entities, or position themselves as long-term civil society actors. These discussions take place under simultaneous security, political, and funding pressures, making rushed or prescriptive external interventions more likely to generate confusion than meaningful support.
7. **Changes in group names are not merely formal or cosmetic adjustments.** In many cases, renaming reflects direct responses to security risks, registration requirements, or donor expectations, rather than shifts in values or objectives. This dynamic often creates a gap between a group's lived identity and its official representation, with implications for trust, coherence, and sustainability.
8. **The transition from volunteerism to employment constitutes a structural dilemma with no single solution.** A complete shift toward employment-based models risks eroding the collective spirit, value-driven motivation, and community ownership that underpin grassroots action. At the same time, sustaining unpaid volunteerism amid economic collapse leads to burnout, attrition, and the loss of experienced cadres.
9. **Hybrid models and community-linked productive cooperatives emerge as realistic pathways to sustainability.** Field experiences indicate that combining limited support for core cadres with the development of productive initiatives or cooperatives rooted in local communities offers a more viable approach. Such models help preserve value-based engagement while reducing overreliance on short-term cash incentives.
10. **An increasingly important role for intermediary organisations and Sudanese civil society has emerged as a connective pillar.** Many grassroots groups rely—directly or indirectly—on Sudanese civil society organisations or intermediary bodies to provide functions they cannot fulfil independently, including psychosocial support, legal aid, contextual analysis, media engagement, and communication with donors. This reliance reflects a functional gap created by the complexity of the operating environment, rather than a deficiency in the capacities or legitimacy of grassroots groups themselves.

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# Conclusion

The grassroots mutual aid initiatives examined in this study did not emerge as ad hoc responses to the war that erupted in April 2023. Instead, they represent the contemporary expression of a longer trajectory of civic organisation, collective action, and value-driven engagement that has shaped Sudanese society over the past decade. These initiatives draw on accumulated social capital forged through student movements, neighbourhood organising, professional associations, faith-based spaces, and youth-led networks that predate the war and played decisive roles during periods of political mobilisation and social solidarity. The war did not create these forms of organisation; it revealed their depth, resilience, and centrality at a moment of institutional collapse.

This historical grounding is essential to understanding how grassroots initiatives assumed life-sustaining roles so quickly and effectively. Their practices are rooted in core civil society values—voluntarism, collective responsibility, horizontal decision-making, and accountability to the community—rather than in projectized logics or externally imposed mandates. These values continue to shape how groups organise, mobilise resources, negotiate access, and maintain legitimacy, even as they operate under extreme pressure, violence, and risk.

The findings demonstrate that grassroots mutual aid initiatives in Sudan are not peripheral, temporary, or merely reactive actors within the humanitarian landscape. They constitute a socially embedded system of response that has repeatedly proven its capacity to sustain life, preserve social cohesion, and adapt within fragmented and highly politicised security environments. Their effectiveness stems from trust-based networks and locally negotiated legitimacy, enabling them to operate where state institutions and international mechanisms are absent, constrained, or politically restricted. Attempts to impose standardised organisational models, rigid compliance frameworks, or externally prescribed pathways of institutional development risk undermining the very characteristics that make these initiatives viable.

At the same time, grassroots initiatives are engaged in deep internal deliberations regarding identity, sustainability, and future direction. These debates should not be misread as organisational weakness or lack of clarity. On the contrary, they reflect a high degree of reflexivity and political maturity under prolonged crisis conditions. The evidence indicates that forced institutionalisation, narrow funding models centred on salaried employment, and conditional support tied to formal registration frequently intensify internal tensions rather than resolve them. More adaptive hybrid approaches—combining limited core support,

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volunteer-based engagement, and community-linked productive or cooperative initiatives—offer more realistic pathways for continuity while preserving collective ownership and value-driven motivation.

Equally significant is the role of Sudanese civil society organisations operating as intermediary or connective infrastructure within a fractured humanitarian ecosystem. Their role is not to replace grassroots actors, but to enable them—by providing contextual analysis, specialised services, risk management support, and translation between local realities and international systems. These intermediary spaces sustain coordination and communication across geographic and political fragmentation. They should be recognised as integral components of any credible localisation, recovery, or reconstruction strategy.

Taken together, the experience of Sudan’s grassroots initiatives challenges prevailing humanitarian assumptions about scale, professionalism, and sustainability. It calls for a recalibration of international engagement—one that prioritises contextual intelligence, relational trust, and adaptive partnerships over uniform technical compliance. Approaches that fail to acknowledge the historical roots, civic values, and organisational intelligence of these actors risk reproducing the same structural disconnects that have constrained humanitarian effectiveness throughout the current crisis.

This study does not argue for the romanticisation of grassroots action. Instead, it calls for its serious recognition as a central pillar of Sudan’s societal resilience. Supporting these initiatives requires patience, political awareness, and humility, alongside financial resources. Only through such an approach can international actors meaningfully contribute to sustaining life, dignity, and social cohesion in Sudan—both during the war and throughout the long, complex process of recovery that will follow.

The findings unequivocally demonstrate that Sudan’s grassroots mutual aid networks constitute a foundational, resilient, and value-driven humanitarian system. Their effectiveness is rooted in a deep social contract and horizontal structures, a reality the current conflict has both exposed and depended upon. However, sustaining this critical infrastructure demands more than ad hoc recognition; it requires a targeted strategy to address the structural challenges—such as the volunteerism dilemma, forced institutionalisation, and the connectivity divide—that threaten their continuity. The subsequent Operational Recommendations translate this study’s core insights into an actionable framework, delineating specific, context-sensitive roles for international donors, Sudanese civil society organisations, and the grassroots groups themselves to ensure the long-term viability and impact of this essential work.

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## For Donors and International Organisations

### Funding Architecture

- Build networks of hyper-local partners with distinct regional access and trust, rather than relying on single national partners.
- Design flexible funding models that adapt rapidly to changing contexts and accept hybrid structures combining professional staff with volunteer bases.
- Invest in secure communication infrastructure, contextual analysis, and risk management as fundamental funding conditions.

### Respecting Grassroots Autonomy

- Provide temporal and organisational space for grassroots groups to define their own identity and structure without imposing ready-made models.
- Avoid linking funding to changes in names, rhetoric, or organisational form unless these stem from internal decisions by the groups themselves.

### Sustainable Models Beyond Salaries

- Support cooperatives and productive projects linked to communities as integrated components of humanitarian-developmental funding, not separate tracks.
- Recognise local production and cooperative work as context-appropriate alternatives to salary-dependent sustainability models.

### Intermediary Organisations

- Recognise Sudanese intermediary organisations as functional partners within the response system, not substitutes for grassroots actors.
- Support tripartite models (Donor-Intermediary-Grassroots) that distribute roles according to specialisation whilst preserving grassroots independence.
- Invest in these bodies as spaces that transcend conflict and geographic boundaries, maintaining communication and analysis channels in divided environments.

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## For Sudanese Civil Society Organisations

### Partnership Approach & Institutional Development

- Build integrative partnerships with grassroots groups rather than competing with or substituting for them.
- Support grassroots groups in their internal dialogues about identity and direction, without rushing to transform them into traditional organisations.
- Respect the plurality of grassroots work forms and recognise that institutional maturity extends beyond registration or formal structures.

### Risk Management & Operational Frameworks

- Develop lightweight internal risk management frameworks that support rather than undermine grassroots work.
- Invest in simplifying knowledge and transferring contextual analysis to field actors.

### Hybrid Models & Economic Resilience

- Pilot hybrid work models that balance the need for stable core staff whilst maintaining a voluntary and grassroots character.
- Support the establishment of productive cooperatives (agricultural, service, energy, artisanal) in partnership with local communities, enhancing economic resilience for both actors and communities.

### Service Provision & Intermediary Functions

- Strengthen the role as a knowledge and service incubator, providing specialised support (psychosocial, legal, analysis, communication, documentation) on demand and in ways that respect local context.
- Act as a professional intermediary between donors and grassroots groups, alleviating administrative and linguistic burdens on grassroots groups without monopolising representation or decision-making.

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## For Grassroots Groups

### Coordination & Communication Infrastructure

- Strengthen cross-regional coordination mechanisms and develop communication and digital security protocols appropriate to the context.

### Identity & Internal Governance

- Manage internal discussions about identity and direction consciously and gradually, whilst documenting core values and principles that should not erode under pressure from security or funding.
- Clearly define roles that require full- or part-time dedication versus those that can remain voluntary, preventing internal erosion or conflicts.

### Sustainable Funding Models

- Diversify sources of support to reduce reliance on cash incentives.
- Explore cooperatives and productive projects as collective paths to sustainability, rather than transforming humanitarian work into individual employment.

### Strategic Use of External Support

- Utilise intermediary bodies as spaces for support and integration whilst maintaining independence and community ownership.
- Distinguish between what can be managed internally and what requires specialised external expertise, reducing internal attrition.

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# Annexes

- Survey questions
- FGD method/questions
- KII guide questions



**Crisis  
Coordination  
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