



DCPSF Gender and Peacebuilding Initiative Final Report January 2020

I. WORKING CONTEXT:

Since the start of the project in January, the context in Sudan has been dominated by ongoing political and economic instability and a volatile security situation which has deteriorated severely in more recent months. Since December 2018 there have been widespread and frequent protests across the country, which culminated in April in the ousting of the country's president, Omar el-Bashir, and the creation of the Transitional Military Council (TMC). Continued protests and violence have created an unpredictable and volatile security situation, compounding the existing macroeconomic crisis and impacting CARE's ability to carry out many programme activities.

Further deterioration in the security situation occurred after the violent dispersal of protesters at a sit-in site outside the military headquarters in Khartoum and a number of other sites across the country on 3rd June, with dozens of people killed. This exacerbated instability and security challenges across Sudan, restricting travel and delaying the implementation of certain project activities, particularly in Darfur. As such all international staff were evacuated for periods of between 1 and 2 months, with the situation requiring close follow-up and regular adjustments being made to our operational modalities.

This political upheaval had security ramifications across the country, including Khartoum and all five states of Darfur, GaPI's implementation areas. Instances of localised conflict increased during this period, particularly in North Darfur and the Jebel Marra area (which covers parts of West and Central Darfur). Incidents were also reported around Nyala in South Darfur. East Darfur remained relatively calm.

II. BACKGROUND:

Project purpose:

The Gender and Peacebuilding Initiative (GaPI) focuses on DCPSF's gender strategy objectives, designed to unpack and better understand women's meaningful participation at community and higher levels decision structures and enable the development of a project document for implementation project. Phase I of the initiative was a research phase and formed the foundation and guidance for a subsequent implementation. The research phase had an intended duration period of six months and began in January 2019. Due to a number of challenges,

highlighted in the previous section and expanded upon in the 'Challenges' section below, the project received a three month no cost extension.

The research project was designed to investigate the barriers to and opportunities for improvement in women's meaningful participation in Community-Based Reconciliation Mechanisms (CBRMs); how SGBV was dealt by CBRMs; and the peacebuilding capacity of existing women's rights organisations in Darfur. To ensure a comprehensive participation of all actors in Darfur, CARE has worked the research in collaboration with two NNGOs, Darfur Development and Reconstruction Agency (DDRA) and Global Aid Hand (GAH), to carry out this research across all five Darfur states.

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Project staff:

CARE experienced challenges in recruiting national staff for the project team, which required qualified personnel with both gender and research experience and the willingness to be deployed to the field. Although this caused some delays, CARE consulted Ahfad University Gender Centre and other networking and were able to help in locating suitable candidates. These efforts helped to access full time staff for the project.

The project implementation was led and coordinated by a 100% full time staff project manager, expert in research work; a senior gender officer, a gender expert graduate in MSc gender study, and a peace building expert with experience in Darfur, all women. Furthermore, peace building experts from national partner GAH and DDRA, two staff from each have participated in the overall planning implementation of the project. CARE's senior program experts were also involved in all stages of the program providing important technical and managerial leadership.

Data collection and Analysis:

After the launch workshop in Khartoum and the validation workshop in Nyala, the fieldwork began in South and East Darfur in mid-February. The first round of data collection was successfully completed in South and East Darfur with few challenges. The first round of data collection in West and North Darfur had to be postponed halfway through, and the start of the data collection in Central Darfur delayed, due to a deterioration in the security situation in the country after the fall of president Omar el-Bashir. A second round of data collection was carried out in all states except Central Darfur, which the research team was only able to visit. After a number of unavoidable and unanticipated delays (as outlined in the 'Challenges' section below), all data collection was completed by July 2019.

The database was built and tested, and much of the data entry completed and validated on time. Mapping the services available to survivors of SGBV and collating the current referral pathways has been challenging due to a lack of accessible and comprehensive information, and remains ongoing. The training materials used by various NGOs when setting up CBRMs is currently being

reviewed by the research team. The remaining analysis of the data collected in the field was done in collaboration of gender experts from Ahfad University Gender Centre in order to compile the final research report. The work on the project document for phase II of GaPI was carried out alongside the production of the final research report.

Validation Workshop:

Internal validation workshops and meetings were conducted at different stages of the project with national NGOs, gender experts and sectoral staffs to get reflections, opinions and comments in CARE office. The meeting in Nyaya was the first important meeting which helped to get more information and identify gaps and made recommendation for the second phase of the data collection process. These helped a lot to improve and get back to sources of information to gather detailed information.

Furthermore, two meetings were held with the Project Advisory Committee to present the findings and get opinions on the analysis and incorporate new insights to the research report. On 22nd July a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held in Khartoum CARE office, bringing together various development and gender experts from UN DCPSF, CARE, DDRA, GAH, Ahfad University Gender Unit, think tanks and unaffiliated gender professionals. The meeting focused on the preliminary findings that had been analysed by the research team, with the interdisciplinary experts offering a fruitful and valid critique of the analysis so far, and suggestions to bear in mind going forward. The Committee also discussed recommendations for the project proposal for phase II. A second and final PAC meeting was also held at UNDP office including more than 15 agencies representation and valuable comments and inputs were obtained from the participants.

Project Document Preparation

Based on the findings of the research initiative, a project document is prepared and submitted to UNDP for 18 months period. The field level analysis and findings enriched by the technical experts from different stakeholders in different forums have supported the development of need based proposal to enhance the participation of women and girls in leadership and peace building decisions. The project is a \$500,000 budget with gender equality and women empowerment at the centre of the framework. The project will have a strategic linkage and integration with other women focused projects run by CARE in same operational areas. The project will continue to have an advisory committee that brings different gender and women empowerment experts and will be informed and consulted about the project at different stages of the project for a potential amendment and/or addition of impactful interventions and approaches.

Recommendations:

The project has identified a number of structural, institutional, community and individual level recommendations that are well accepted by the participants from UN and NGOs meeting at UNDP conference hall. However, there are unaddressed areas that need further research such as the lists of women groups, associations and their status; strategies to strengthen women literacy; more analysis on SGBV and protection issues of at risk population groups.

CHALLENGES:

Besides the delay in staff recruitment, a number of other challenges faced the project research work both at state and community levels. The following are some of the problems.

Operational challenges caused by the volatile political and security situation in Sudan:

As outlined in the context update above, since the start of the political change in December 2018, the political and security situation has been volatile and unpredictable throughout Sudan. The political upheaval caused by widespread protests and the eventual fall of President Omar el-Bashir via an army coup in April created instability and security challenges across Sudan, restricting travel and delaying the implementation of certain project activities, particularly in the field. All five states in Darfur were impacted to some degree by localised conflicts, the timings of which most notably affected fieldwork in Central, North and West Darfur. These challenges (compounded by others listed below) precipitated the need for a no-cost extension of three months requested and granted through end of August 2019.

Subsequent to this extension request, the security situation deteriorated further, most notably after the 3rd June when Sudanese security forces cracked down on protestors, violently clearing the sit-in site in Khartoum and other demonstration sites across the country, killing dozens of people. This led to increased and sustained instability across Sudan, including in Khartoum and throughout Darfur. As a result, the GaPI Project Coordinator and CARE Sudan's Programme Quality Coordinator were evacuated for a period of six weeks and two months respectively. Communication between the research team members (then spread across Sudan, Ethiopia, and the UK) was further and severely hindered by the internet blackout in Sudan (and later in Ethiopia), as well as unreliable telephone reception across Sudan, particularly in Darfur.

These protracted challenges have had a severe impact on the project timelines, with the research team still working hard to counter these delays. The work plan has been constantly re-evaluated and adapted in an effort to mitigate the operational difficulties being faced. This has meant that the second round of data collection was not as extensive as previously planned, and that some of the funds allocated to these activities have not been spent. It also had an impact on the database building and data entry and validation processes, with a knock-on effect of delaying the data analysis and review with internal and external gender and sector experts.

Implementing partners not complying with timelines for financial reporting:

We have had some difficulties in obtaining reports from our implementing partners, mainly the financial reports and supporting documents required for the liquidation of their first instalments in the agreed timelines. For DDRA this has meant a delay in the release of their second instalment and the potential for a significant underspend. Challenges were also encountered with Global Aid Hand (GAH). Their financial report and supporting documents for the liquidation of their first instalment fell far below the quality level necessary to be processed by our finance team. Given the poor quality of the financial documentation received from GAH, it was difficult for CARE to gauge the amount they spent on GaPI. All these challenges were addressed during the extension period which allowed to implement some remaining activities.

Delays in obtaining HAC approval for partners and project consultants:

CARE experienced some difficulties obtaining HAC approval for: technical agreements with partners at both country and state levels and conducting field interviews and FGDs, particularly for questionnaires related to SGBV. These difficulties contributed to delays in start up the project implementation. However, it should be noted that in areas where partners have ongoing DCPSF projects, obtaining HAC approval was significantly easier, highlighting the importance of such relationship building. Indeed, thanks to the efforts of our IPs and their strong relations with HAC, we were able to get the project questionnaires approved quicker than initially anticipated in the three states without CARE offices.

IV. Progress against work plan:

The below table shows the project progress against plan. Most of the project activities are carried out as planned, while some changes were made in agreement with UNDP.

Plans	Achievement
1. Project staff recruitment	Completed but late than planned dates
2. Project Technical Agreement	Completed but late than planned dates
3. Project launching workshop	Conducted in each state and Khartoum
4. Establishment of Program Advisory Committee	Established including local NGOs, gender experts, UNDP, and others
5. Conduct Desk review	Desk review conducted by the project team
6. Field data collection and analysis	This is done and detailed report is presented in the final project report and research findings report
6.1 Mapping of women's rights organizations and assessment of their peacebuilding capacity	This is partially done due to absence of readily available data in the field
6.2 Mapping of services available to survivors of SGBV	This is not done due to the limited engagement of NGOs in SGBV work
6.3 Conduct 20 CBRMs FGD discussion	This done and accomplished
6.4 Conduct 18 women group FGDs	This done and accomplished
6.5 Conduct 22 Youth Group FGDs (one female group per state)	Accomplished
6.6 Conduct 14 Religious / community leaders KIIs	Accomplished
6.7 Conduct 35 CBRMs' women members KIIs	Accomplished
6.8 Conduct 25 economically active women KIIs	Accomplished
6.9 Conduct 7 Panel discussion (Religious leaders, MoSA, HAC, women Parliamentarians, INGO, NGOs and Universities)	Accomplished
7. Midterm review	Conducted and shared
8. Compiling findings and discussion with experts	Done
9. Debriefing to Advisory Committee on findings	This was done at CARE office
10. Debriefing to Advisory Committee and UNDP and other peace actors on key findings	This is conducted at UNDP conference hall
11. Produce research report	Reports are shared to UNDP and others
12. Produce Project final report	Produced and shared



CBRM FGD in Eisheraya, East Darfur



General meeting explaining the research objectives, Abu sorooj, West Darfur



Final project de-briefing at UNDP conference hall, 28 February 2020