

Gender Assessment of Political Parties' Internal Regulations in Sudan





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This report was prepared in the context of a programme entitled 'Supporting Sudan's Democratic Transition'. The programme includes a series of components all of which aim to support Sudan's transition to a democratic system of government, and to contribute to SDG 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The programme is supported by a fund from the European Union and the Embassy of Sweden in Khartoum. This report was prepared by International IDEA as part of the Gender Equality and Women's Political Empowerment component funded by the Embassy of Sweden.

Design and layout: Dalia Elazab

Cover photo by: United Nations Photo 'North Darfur Woman Votes in Sudanese National Elections'

ISBN (print): 978-91-7671-440-9

ISBN (PDF): 978-91-7671-441-6

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.65>

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List of abbreviations

CEDAW..Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	
CD	Constitutional Document
CSO.....	Civil society organization
FFC.....	Forces of Freedom and Change
HAQ.....	New Forces Democratic Movement
PSA.....	Personal Status Act
SPLM-N.....	Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North
SWU.....	Sudanese Women's Union
UN.....	United Nations
VAW.....	Violence against women
NGOs.....	Non-governmental organizations

Acknowledgements

This gender assessment of political parties' internal regulations in Sudan is the product of a collaborative initiative led by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and completed by a lead consultant and three research assistants.

The team is grateful for the support received from International IDEA staff, who have been understanding and patient enough to tolerate the delays caused by the fluid Sudanese context and the challenge of dealing with Covid-19. We are particularly grateful for Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Khushbu Agrawal, Jessika Larsson, and Gram Matenga for their valuable input, for Mahitab Mahgoub for coordinating the study, and for Omnia Gorashe for her support throughout this process. Special thanks are extended to International IDEA's publications team who have helped shape and publish this work.

We highly appreciate the cooperation and understanding we received from party leaders. We are also thankful for and appreciative of all the women and men who made an effort to fill in online questionnaires, accepted interviews directly and over the phone, participated in focus group discussions and made documents available.

Executive summary

In light of the Sudanese revolution of December 2018, Sudanese political parties are expected to be prepared: not only to run in the upcoming election but also to make sure that democracy is sustained and protected. In order to accomplish these goals, parties need reform in order to overcome fragmentation, rusted constitutions and programmes, and hazy relationships with their constituencies. Parties must take into consideration the changing context in Sudan and the aspirations of the younger generation for democracy and good governance. Therefore, almost all the parties included in this study are in the process of preparing to convene their general conferences in the near future.

As these political parties are considered ‘the gateway’ to women’s political leadership and participation, women’s empowerment and gender equality must be mainstreamed and put into practice at all levels of political party processes. The institutionalization of gender equality is critical if men and women are to enjoy equal political rights and opportunities in practice. Increasing the number of women in political parties will not automatically achieve this institutionalization, although engaging more women in the political sphere should remain a key goal for women’s political empowerment. In the absence of institutionalized structures, policies, programmes and processes that ensure gender equality, achieving a critical mass of 40 per cent women’s representation in politics as stipulated by the Constitutional Document (CD) of 2019 will be very hard if not impossible.

Moreover, despite the fact that political parties attempt to address women’s participation in their constitutions and programmes, provisions have yet to be translated into action, and the realization of gender equality is still far-fetched. This is attributed to the broader issue of cultural factors and negative social norms that are entrenched within and perpetuated by political party norms, systems, practices, procedures and a leadership hierarchy dominated by men. Respondents indicated that the history and practice of most of the political parties included in this study are patriarchal and hence male-dominated.

This assessment conducts a thorough review of political parties' internal regulations, as stipulated in the terms of reference for the study. The report examines political parties' internal policies and systems and their impact on women's and men's equal access to positions of power and decision-making at all levels.

This study used a mixed-method approach to explore how Sudanese political parties respond to and describe meaningful participation of women and men in political leadership and decision-making. The authors reviewed documents from 10 political parties through a gender lens. This was complemented by qualitative research to generate primary data through interviews, focus group discussions and narration of oral testimonies and stories from party members of both women and men without prejudice as to age, ethnicity or position.

The review showed that the existence of dual legal systems—customary and religious law on the one hand and formal law on the other—often means that women's rights are compromised due to customary and religious interpretations and application of the laws in Sudan. This is clearly reflected in the current Personal Status Act (PSA), the Criminal Code and other discriminatory laws. The PSA in particular compromises women's political participation and limits all possibilities for career development and promotion.

Moreover, it became evident that the low participation of women within political parties is a reflection of cultural factors and negative social norms. These are further exacerbated by their entrenchment within political party norms and male-dominated cultures, and also by the lack of capacity-building interventions that are tailored to the needs of women.

As men dominate leadership structures in political parties, the government and Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) structures, they remain essential actors for implementing change. Their commitment and political will have to be sought and ensured if women's issues and the women's agenda are to be given as much consideration as those of men.

Key recommendations

1. The Sudanese Government should write the provisions of the CD into working laws that ensure the equal participation of women and men in the political arena, with a focus on achieving better gender-balanced participation in public offices at all levels of decision-making. The government should also establish a legal protection mechanism for the rights of women on an equal basis with men and ensure, through competent justice systems, effective protection of women against any act of discrimination.

2. Political parties should institutionalize gender equality in their statutes, policies and codes of conduct. It is important to institutionalize gender equality as a principle and value governing how a party operates, particularly in core party documents such as constitutions. Parties should also design tailored capacity-building programmes targeting women and men, as well as support initiatives, including resource mobilization efforts that promote women in politics and other structures. They should also invest in the elimination of negative cultural and traditional customs that inhibit equal participation of men and women in local governance and other grassroots structures.
3. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and activists should raise community awareness of the concepts of gender and address the root causes of gender inequality. They should also strive to build bridges of trust between women in civil society and female members of political parties through guided alliances and solidarity across horizontal and vertical lines.
4. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including international NGOs, and donors should advocate for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality within government structures and political parties. They should also provide technical and financial assistance to women's and youth groups in political parties to enhance their capacities and negotiating power.

Introduction

Background and contextual analysis

Sudan has been undergoing major political and social changes since the December 2018 revolution that ousted the Islamic military dictatorship that had been in place for 30 years. These changes are taking place during a challenging transitional period filled with internal and external threats as well as numerous opportunities and possibilities.

Two years have elapsed since the revolution, and the transitional government and the FFC are facing serious political and economic challenges. Peace talks concluded in October 2020 with a partial peace agreement; the CD was amended on the basis of the peace agreement, including a change in the government structures to accommodate the signatories of the peace agreement. In the meantime, several tribal conflicts erupted in Darfur, Kordufan and eastern Sudan. At the same time, social pressure is mounting as the prices of bread, fuel and other necessities are escalating at an exponential rate, the Sudanese pound continues to depreciate against other currencies, and there are no economic reforms or solutions on the horizon. The impact of the Sudan conference partners that pledged funding has not yet been seen or felt.

Furthermore, the notions of citizenship and equality are very blurred in the minds and behaviour of individuals and institutions. Coupled with a lack of knowledge about the role of government at the local and national levels, this is posing a serious accountability problem. People associate government positions with personal and tribal interests and privileges rather than the provision of services and accountability to citizens.

Sudan is generally quite polarized: there exists a duality that shapes both individual and collective mindsets. This polarization is manifested in the dichotomies of urban and rural, centre and periphery, men and women, old and young, haves and have-nots, Muslims and non-Muslims, modern and traditional, pro-government and opposition, etc. These dichotomies have helped create and reinforce the major power relations within communities in Sudan. For example, the widespread patriarchal culture

facilitates men's power over women, which in turn normalizes the oppression of women and further entrenches men's privileges to the extent that they are internalized in the culture of both men and women. Another example can be seen in the differences in how modern and traditional Sudanese Muslim women perceive gender equality. Whereas liberal Muslim activists advocate for gender equality in all areas of law, conservative Muslim activists do not deem gender equality necessary or desirable. They all frame their arguments within Islam, offering different interpretations of Islamic law.

Throughout Sudan's tumultuous history of revolutions against dictatorships, racism and war, Sudanese women have been held back from actively participating in politics. Despite the significant role women and youth played during the resistance against the previous regime, they contributed very little to shaping the country's strategies and directions during the transitional period. They were marginally represented in the negotiations that followed.

Sudanese culture and social norms

The patriarchal system in Sudan has been shaped by the interaction and (re)construction of culture, religion, tribal affiliation, geography and politics. This has resulted in a male-dominated hierarchy at the family, household, tribal and public levels, and has led to greater social exclusion and subordination of women. Gender relations may be labelled 'complex', with differences in terms of age group, social class and residential setting—whether one lives in a rural or urban area. An imbalance in development; inequalities in wealth and power; neglect in terms of social services, especially education and health; the imposition of discriminatory laws and regulations; and the prevalence of insecurity and gender-based violence have all reinforced male domination and widened gender gaps. Particularly in rural areas of Sudan, family and social relations maintain solid hierarchical structures where the father (or a male substitute) is the head of the family with full authority over women and young members of the family or household.

Decision-making is not necessarily associated with the amount of work undertaken—that is, while women do most of the work inside and outside the household, the men, in most cases, control the income and are the decision-makers. In certain areas women and girls are deprived of basic human rights such as education and freedom of choice. Furthermore, traditions and customs deny women property rights, especially in rural areas. A lack of or limited access to financial and physical resources traps women in small indoor businesses and in turn reinforces stereotypic gender roles and reproductive roles.

Power relations involve many dimensions of and actors involved in economic, political, cultural and personal dynamics, resulting in all sorts of 'isms' and leading to social exclusion and discrimination. Although the traditional gender division of labour at the household level is no longer dominant, as women have a presence in the informal sector, where they look for additional income to support their families, this change in women's roles has not been accompanied by a change in men's roles; hence, the result is that women are overworked and overexploited. This change in women's roles is intensifying an existing imbalance in gender relations and is disempowering women despite an increase in their income.

Long-term and ongoing conflicts have made Sudanese women much more vulnerable to violence. This is reflected in the high levels of sexual violence perpetrated by several parties during conflicts—and that has continued in post-conflict and in conflict-free areas. Displaced women and girls in particular are at high risk of sexual abuse and rape. These serious forms of violence against women are not adequately reported due to a lack of protection and justice mechanisms, social stigma and the impunity—on cultural grounds—enjoyed by the perpetrators.

Yet, it is not uncommon for women to accept and even defend their position as inferior, hiding behind social norms shaped by customs and traditions. Gender-based violence—a manifestation of the power of the perpetrator over the victim—is rarely challenged institutionally or culturally. Some women prefer to manipulate their social and cultural inferiority and remain in their *uncomfortable* comfort zone rather than risk an uncertain justice system or a hostile cultural context. For example, in Darfur, because of a lack of trust in the formal justice system, women prefer the equally discriminatory traditional justice system because conformity with cultural norms is more accepted than an uncertain reliance on the formal, but incompetent, justice system.

Social change in light of the December 2018 revolution

Envisioning a democratic, peaceful and inclusive Sudan, activists across the country have called for the incorporation of women in decision-making at all levels of the government. Since the December revolution, women's movements have been calling for 50 per cent women's participation at all levels. For example, there have been campaigns such as '50% for women', '*Hagana Kamil*,¹ and others, lobbying and advocacy initiatives that have included sending memos to the prime minister and the FFC, and awareness raising among women and men on the importance and benefits of women's political participation. The CD stipulates that a

1 '*Hagana Kamil*' is an advocacy campaign by civil society organizations and women's networks calling for equality and the equal representation of women. The Sudanese-Arabic phrase, '*Hagana Kamil*', means we have full/equal rights and our rights are non-negotiable.

minimum of 40 per cent of the members of the Transitional Legislative Council must be women; however, women at large are demanding 50 per cent representation at all levels. At the top of the women's rights agenda is the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), putting in place an effective national action plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, establishing a women and gender equality commission and ensuring that the required 40 per cent quota for women is met on the commission as prescribed in the CD. Sudanese women at both the national and the state level are calling for legal reform with an emphasis on the Personal Status Act and the Criminal Code.

Development of political parties in Sudan

The Sudanese Graduates' Conference, held in 1938, during which the future of politics in Sudan was discussed, laid the foundation for the formation of Sudanese political parties. The 1940s witnessed the foundation of a small number of political parties, such as the Umma Party, the Unionist Party and the Sudanese Movement for Liberty, which later became the Sudanese Communist Party. By the early 1950s strong modern political forces started to emerge, such as the Sudanese Communist Party and the Islamic Charter Front, which were linked to trade unions and social movements. The strength of these political forces was noticeable in the structure of the post–October 1964 government, which was called the government of Bodies Front, where clear progress in the political and civil rights movement was evident.

The results of the 1965 elections marked a revolutionary transformation, as a woman won a seat in parliament for the first time, and the Beja Congress, which had been a growing power representing the interests of rural areas, gained representation in parliament.

By the mid-1980s, the Islamic wing was on the rise, competing with traditional forces and gaining wide parliamentary representation in the 1986 election that followed the uprising the previous year. Other forces also emerged representing marginalized groups—whether in terms of ethnicity, underdevelopment or some other factor. Among these groups were women who were able to form an electoral force and boost their power in political organizations.

Box 1. Historical background to Sudanese women's movements

1952–1982: Gradual upward progress; women succeeded in gaining political, economic and social rights. The Sudanese Women's Union (SWU) was able to bring women together around a common agenda. Social awareness about women's rights, education in particular, increased significantly, and women started moving into the civil service as doctors, judges, engineers, teachers, lawyers, etc., as well as joining political parties in increasing numbers.

1983–1995: Setbacks following the imposition of Sharia law, which discriminates against women. This is considered a dark period for women in Sudan. It started with the sudden imposition of Sharia law (September laws), which violated women's rights in many aspects, and continued to get darker after the 1989 coup, which came with more restrictive laws and laid off thousands of women from the civil service.

1996–2019: A period of slow return following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the subsequent formation of several women's and gender-focused organizations such as Mutawinat, the Gender Centre, Salmamah, Asm'a, Almanar and others. These organizations raised public awareness of the rights of women and girls and the concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The members of these organizations included women from political parties and members of the dismantled SWU in addition to independent young women unaffiliated with any organizations.

2019–2021: Women as a force of revolution and a force for change standing on a solid historical ground of resilience and achievements even through the Ingaz regime. In addition to their unquestionable participation in the December 2018 revolution all over the country, Sudanese women are organizing and coming together in alliances, networks and forums. MANSAM, a coalition of women in political parties and civil society, is a good example. Other structures include the No to Women's Oppression initiative in Khartoum, the Girls' Students network in Gedarf, the Coalition of Women in Gezira, the Darfur Peace and Security Network and the WA'l group in Blue Nile. The SWU is also coming back and is trying to claim its historical legacy. Women are calling for 50 per cent participation through campaigns such as #50% for women, 'Hagana Kamil' and others.

Mahasin Abdel Al and other pioneering women assert that the period from 1952 to 1954 witnessed the peak of women's activity in Sudan, as a series of events enabled women to advance in the political arena. The Sudanese Communist Party surpassed other parties by recruiting female members at the beginning of the 1950s. Moreover, the Sudanese Women's Union (SWU) was formed in 1952, which focused on a wider range of issues such as raising awareness among educated people at the national level while linking women's issues with national issues and contributing to increased political and civil awareness among women in order to enable them to have a voice in demanding their political and civil rights.

By 1965 Sudanese women's most significant gains were the following:

- the right to equal pay for equal work;
- increased education opportunities, unified curricula and fair employment in the civil service; and
- the right to vote, to contest elections and to participate in labour unions.

Rationale and objectives of the study

It is assumed that the current transitional period in Sudan will lay the groundwork for multiparty democracy. In this respect, existing political parties are expected to be prepared not only to run in the upcoming election but also to make sure that democracy is sustained and protected. However, a long period marked by the absence of democracy, conflict, suppressive laws and regulations, the militarization and Islamization of the education system and the fragmentation of Sudanese CSOs has played a major role in creating a society whose citizens have little understanding of concepts such as human rights, democracy and equality. This poses a problem because civic education by itself is not enough to improve the understanding of the notions of equality and citizenship unless it is coupled with a change in attitudes and in practices along with institutional reform, particularly in political parties.

It is vital to examine political parties in terms of how they treat and include women. A gender-equal society is expected to be a society in which both men and women, as equal members, have the opportunity to participate in all kinds of political and social activities and equally enjoy political, economic and cultural benefits, and share responsibilities. In such a society, the human rights of men and women are equally ensured and respected.

The overall objective of the assessment of political parties' internal regulations, as stipulated in the terms of reference for this study, is to examine parties' internal policies and systems and their impact on women's and men's equal access to positions of power and decision-making at all levels, starting within the parties themselves.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- present evidence of the impact of political parties' policies on men's and women's ability to access elected positions of power and decision-making at all levels;
- explore the influence of the political culture on gender equality in political leadership; and
- propose strategies, initiatives and options that political parties can adopt to ensure equal access for and meaningful participation of women and

men in political leadership and decision-making, including structures and procedures to remove barriers that directly and indirectly discriminate against the participation of women.

Structure of the report

This report is divided into five main sections: (1) an introduction, including a contextual analysis and the objectives and methodology of the study; (2) a description of the constitutional provisions on women's rights and an analysis of party documents with reference to gender-equality indicators including language, gender-specific statements, affirmative action and quotas, capacity building and recognition of international human and women's rights; (3) an analysis of interviews and focus group discussions that includes a comparison of members' experiences in terms of conformity with party documents; (4) a summary of the conclusions; and (5) recommendations.

Methodology

Research methodology

This study used a mixed-method approach to explore how Sudanese political parties respond to and describe the meaningful participation of women and men in political leadership and decision-making.

Desk review

A desk review was conducted to assess the current constitutions, structures, strategies, manifestos, programmes and other relevant documents from Sudanese political parties. The parties were identified based on selection criteria that included but was not limited to the following:

- the date or period of establishment (to make sure that old and young parties are represented in the sample):
 - pre-independence parties (1940–1950)
 - post-independence parties (after the October and April revolutions, 1960s–1990s)
 - during and after the December 2018 revolution (2005–2020)
- the party's participation in previous elections;
- the party's history in advocating for democracy;
- the geographical coverage of the party;
- the party's affiliation with armed resistance if the party has a regional, rather than national, focus; and
- the parties represented in MANSAM.

Box 2. Selected parties

1. Umma Party
2. Democratic Unionist Party (Original)
3. Republican Party
4. Sudanese Communist Party
5. New Forces Democratic Movement (HAQ Party)
6. Ba'ath Party
7. Sudanese Congress Party
8. Beja Congress Party
9. Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North Party (SPLM-N)
10. Binaa Sudan Party

Data extraction

At this stage, an a priori approach was followed in the development of the methodological strategy that was used to guide the desk review. That is, the categories for analysis were established based on a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators used to draw important inferences from party documents in order to create relevant knowledge:

- Quantitative indicators. These include the number and percentage of women as members in the party, the number and percentage of women in the party's structure, the number and percentage of women in leadership and decision-making positions and the number of articles concerning women in party documents, etc.
- Qualitative indicators. These include the adoption of affirmative actions (quotas), language and wording, safeguarding policies (anti-harassment policy), gender policy, a workplace policy that includes facilities for women (toilets, restrooms, a nursery, etc.), data disaggregated by gender and age, division of tasks (who—concerning both women and men—does what?), etc.

Furthermore, the documents of the selected parties were analysed from a gender perspective based on the following criteria: (a) access to documents; (b) language; (c) gender-equality statements; (d) anti-harassment policy; (e) women-specific structures; and (f) gender sensitivity of party strategies and programmes.

Qualitative analysis

Qualitative research approaches were used to generate primary data through interviews, focus group discussions and narration of oral testimonies and stories involving party

members of both women and men without prejudice as to age, ethnicity, position or location. These approaches enabled us to understand how the parties behave within their complex settings and how this influences their response to the political culture concerning gender equality in political leadership.

Using the data extracted from the desk review analysis, we conducted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews using a checklist of questions (Annex 1). These involved 16 women from the various political parties. Five women preferred to have an informal conversation rather than answering the interview questions. The composition of the focus groups was as follows:

- only female members of the political parties;
- only male members of the parties;
- youth members of the parties;
- youth who were not members of the parties; and
- a mixed group of CSO representatives.

The analysis focused on the following aspects within the political parties:

1. Policy frameworks: constitutions, manifestos, action plans and other policy documents with provisions on gender equality and women's empowerment. Party structures: as specified in policy documents, their leadership and decision-making roles, positioning, the role of the women's wings/units/leagues in political parties in relation to other party structures and the specification of the equal participation of women and men in these structures.
2. Party systems/rules/regulations: identification, nomination and selection of candidates (intra-party democracy systems) and equal participation and representation of women and men in political processes and decision-making.
3. Political parties' positions on gender equality and women's empowerment as articulated in the media and their influence on the general public.

Limitations of the study

1. Number of political parties: there are no fewer than 72 registered political parties in Sudan. The study included only 10 parties based on the above-mentioned criteria. This limitation may pose a challenge because it excluded unregistered parties and parties that exist only at the state and regional levels.
2. Many political parties have old constitutions, the majority of which do not have programmes or policies.
3. Party members' resistance to participation in the study: convincing women and men to participate in this analysis took time and effort. Many party members were reluctant to participate and share information mainly because

of the inherent competition between them and the lack of trust between the parties themselves and between the parties and CSOs. The researchers ensured anonymity of participants and assured congeniality, but this was not enough for some party members. Some parties required official letters to provide access to their documents, which again consumed unnecessary time and effort.

4. Covid-19: the second wave of Covid-19 posed a big challenge for the study. Given the normally weak Internet and frequent power outages, virtual meetings did not go as we planned. It was not possible to hold interviews in person, so we opted to hold them online, bearing in mind that most party members over 30 are not digitally literate. We also used telephone interviews to fill in the gaps. The focus group discussions went quite well with the young generation and civil society activists, but they did not go well for party members, and we had to compensate for this fact with audio messages and telephone calls.

Results

Findings of the desk review

Using the search strategy indicated in the methodology section, 22 documents were identified from various parties and databases. Of these, four were excluded from the analysis, as they were general publications and booklets. As such, the total number of documents included in this study is 18 (see Table 1).

Gender equality in the constitutional document

This part of the report starts by featuring the gender-equality and women-specific provisions in the CD to illustrate the transitional government's constitutional commitment to women's rights, which constitutes a vital reference for political parties. The CD is an interim constitution, and the transitional government should work through the constitution commission to draft a constitution for a post-transition, plural, democratic civil state. Notwithstanding, the gender-equality provisions in the CD should not be seen as the ceiling for gender equality; rather, they are a threshold and a minimum that needs to be maintained.

Box 3. Women's rights in the constitutional document (2019)

Chapter 2: 8. Mandate of the Transitional Period

2. Repeal laws and provisions that restrict freedoms or that discriminate between citizens on the basis of gender.
7. Guarantee and promote women's rights in Sudan in all social, political, and economic fields, and combat all forms of discrimination against women, taking into account provisional preferential measures in both war and peace circumstances.
8. Strengthen the role of young people of both sexes and expand their opportunities in all social, political and economic fields.

Chapter 7: Transitional Legislative Council

2. The participation of women must not be less than 40% of the Transitional Legislative Council's members.

Chapter 12: Independent Commissions

- g. The Women and Gender Equality Commission

Chapter 14: The Document of Rights and Freedoms

49. Women's Rights:

1. The state protects women's rights as mentioned in the international and regional agreements signed by Sudan.
2. The state provides equal rights for men and women in the political and civilian and social and cultural and economic areas, equal pay, equal work conditions and promotional conditions.
3. The state should guarantee the rights of women in all fields and should work to promote them.
4. The state should fight bad practices that undermine the rights and dignity of women.
5. The state should provide free healthcare for mothers, children and pregnant women.

Chapter 15: Comprehensive Peace Issues

3. Applying UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the relevant African Union resolutions regarding participation of women at all levels in the peace process, and applying regional and international charters regarding women's rights.
4. Conducting legal reforms that guarantee women's rights by repealing all laws that discriminate against women and protecting the rights granted to them by this Constitutional Charter.

Gender and women's rights are considered extremely sensitive topics in the context of Sudan, with their strong perceived links to Islam and the local culture. Yet, it is critical to appreciate and reflect on Sudan's history to understand the uncertain pathway towards women's formal rights and the conflicting pressures of political Islam and war.

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, in a return to more democratic structures, a new Interim National Constitution was instituted in 2005. While the Constitution enshrined new rights for women (Figure 2), the oppressive political context enabled the persistence of a number of discriminatory laws and orders. In particular, this included the Personal Status Act (1991), which incorporated discriminatory provisions related to marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance rights, thus establishing a strong patriarchal and male-dominated system.

Analysis of political parties' documents

As democratic associations, political parties play a unique role in any democratic society: they exist to channel the will of the people they represent into public decision-making processes. Not only are political parties the gatekeepers of democracy, but they also serve as the gatekeepers of women's participation in the political arena, facilitating or hindering women's access to political power, as well as the women's agenda. Formal and informal party practices, the prevailing political party culture and persisting gender-based stereotypes can all create obstacles to women's political advancement within a party, even when women have similar membership rights as men. Ensuring women's equal participation in party decision-making structures is essential for promoting gender equality.

Table 1. Selected political parties' documents

Party	Constitution	Regulation	Strategy	Application form	Programme	Manifesto	Main principles	Affiliated women's league	Other
Umma Party	✓				✓			✓ Women's Secretariat	CEDAW from an Islamic perspective (book in Arabic) Islamic and women's rights (book in Arabic)
Sudanese Communist Party	✓				✓				
Democratic Unionist Party	✓								
Ba'ath Party	✓			✓				✓	
Beja Congress Party	✓	✓							
Sudanese Congress Party	✓								Gender policy
SPLM-N	✓					✓			
HAQ	✓						✓		
Republican Party	✓			✓					Booklets on women's rights written by Mahmoud Mohamed Taha (in Arabic) ²
Binaa Sudan Party	✓		✓						
Percentage	100%	10%	10%	20%	20%	10%	10%	20%	

2 Mahmoud Mohammed Taha, the founder of the Republican Party, wrote several booklets on Women's rights and religious affairs.

Availability of and access to documents

The analysis of the documents provided by the selected political parties showed that, although every party had a constitution, some of the constitutions had not been changed since the party's establishment, while others were amended following the change in Sudan's political context and the ousting of the previous regime. Moreover, only 20 per cent or less of the parties in question have strategies, policies or manifestos. This means either that these parties did not have these documents or that they were reluctant to share the documents with us. This reluctance is justified since almost all the parties are in the process of reviewing and updating their documents for Sudan's post-revolution era. It is also important to indicate that almost all the parties were unwilling to share their structure with the research team. The justification again is that current structures are temporary and will be changed according to the new context, and some parties think that the details of their structures are confidential and cannot be shared.

The language and vocabulary used in party documents

Although the Arabic language is not gender-neutral—it has grammatical gender—the analysis shows that the language used within party documents is predominantly masculine, with the exception of sections that were addressed specifically to women. This was attributed to the fact that the political parties were founded by men at a time when women did not even have political rights, which in itself is an indicator of gender blindness and of the perseverance of the common assumption—held by both men and women—that the use of masculine terms does not mean that women are not being addressed. In addition, only masculine terms for leadership positions are used, such as *Mudeer*, *Amin Am*, *Ra'ees*.³ Representatives of some parties justified this decision by arguing that that professional titles are genderless in Arabic. However, we argue that this justification is meant to reinforce power relations that reserve leadership and high-level positions for men, as the same explanation does not apply for junior positions such as *Mumarida*, *Mu'alima*, *Khayata*,⁴ etc., which are quite gendered. Thus, the mindset that high-ranking positions are for men is reinforced and manifests itself in the behaviour, attitudes and practice of political parties, as reflected in the lack of nominations of women for leadership positions for transitional structures.

Table 2 indicates the frequency at which 'gender' and gender-related terms are used in the analysed documents. For instance, the term 'gender' is used 0–5 times, while the term 'woman' or 'women'⁵ appears 0–19 times. The term 'equality' is used 0–10 times, and the range for 'harassment' and 'rape' is only 0–1.

3 These are grammatically masculine Arabic words referring to director, secretary-general and chief, respectively.

4 These are grammatically feminine Arabic words referring to nurse, teacher and clothing designer, respectively.

5 'Woman' and 'women' are treated as two separate terms here, as they are in Arabic language. Woman in Arabic is *Emra'a*, while women in Arabic is *Nisaa*.

Table 2. Frequency of some gender-related terms

Party	Woman	Women	Gender	Equality	Harassment	Rape
Umma Party	6	0	1	1	0	0
Sudanese Communist Party	19	5	1	0	0	1
Democratic Unionist Party	3	0	0	3	0	0
Ba'ath Party	2	1	0	0	0	0
Beja Congress Party	5	1	0	2	0	0
Sudanese Congress Party	3	0	0	3	0	0
SPLM-N	12	0	1	3	0	0
HAQ	2	0	5	8	1	0
Republican Party	1	0	0	10	0	0

Gender equality in party documents

The presence of references to gender equality in party documents is determined by counting all the sentences and phrases that include such references. Table 3 provides an overview of all the collected statements and indicates their source.

The concept of gender equality is manifested and phrased differently among the political parties. Some parties include gender equality in the principle of affirmative action, where women are considered a disadvantaged group suffering from discrimination. Others express very clearly that women comprise half the population and must be empowered to bridge the gender gap through quotas, purposive training programmes, steps to ensure equal rights and measures to address social norms that hinder gender equality.

Gender equality is also associated with the existence of a national democratic state where all citizens enjoy rights. Moreover, some statements focus on discrimination and the removal of discrimination without specifically mentioning women. It should also be noted that some statements include phrases such as ‘Work to implement the rights of women and children as in international conventions’, ‘Repeal laws that degrade women’s dignity or allow attacks on their bodies and dignity’ and ‘equality before the law and equal protection guaranteed by law to any human being without any distinction due to race’.


Table 3. Gender and gender-equality component

Party	Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Document	Text
Umma Party	✓			Paragraph I of Chapter II (Principles, Objectives and Means reads): Adopting the principle of positive discrimination based on gender and geographical location.
Sudanese Communist Party	✓		Programme	<p>The national democratic state guarantees women full equality with men before the law and is committed to ensuring that legal equality becomes effective equality—from the position of the law and the constitution to the level of action and practice, freeing women from inferiority and opening up opportunities for social mobility.</p> <p>Ensuring a woman's right to land ownership and the right to equal earnings and a decision-making position according to her competence.</p> <p>Signing international and women's agreements and committing to implement them.</p> <p>The government has to provide a number of measures to ensure that children are provided with necessary care.</p> <p>The enactment of a personal status law consistent with the constitution and international conventions, which safeguard Sudanese women's rights to custody, inheritance, marriage, divorce, maintenance, equal work and equal pay. Repeal laws that degrade women's dignity or allow attacks on their bodies and dignity.</p> <p>Considering rape in conflict zones a war crime.</p> <p>Caring for women in the countryside and displaced women.</p> <p>Overcoming curricula that perpetuate women's inferiority and oppression.</p> <p>Representing women according to their number and competence in occupying leadership positions in the state apparatus, decision-making positions, legislative and executive institutions, political parties and trade unions.</p>
Democratic Unionist Party		✓		The words equality and non-discrimination were mentioned several times but without referring to women in particular.

Continue Table 3

Ba'ath Party	✓		Sudanese Democratic Union Regulations	<p>The party's constitution does not specify women or gender. The party created a Sudanese Democratic Union where almost all women-related activities are planned and executed through this body. The activities mentioned include raising awareness of women's rights and creating women's forums and networks.</p> <p>The following are among the party's objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•raising awareness of women's issues and women's rights in Sudan through seminars, courses and workshops;•creating forums for those interested in women's issues to make proposals and recommendations that address women's issues;•creating specialized women's networks in the areas of law reform, training, awareness raising and integration of women's efforts throughout Sudan; and•creating alliances with other organizations nationally and regionally to achieve common goals.
Beja Congress Party	✓		Constitution and Regulation	<p>The party's constitution mentions equality in general, but gender equality is not mentioned specifically.</p> <p>ii. Objectives:</p> <p>To seek the establishment of a pluralistic democratic state based on the principles of justice and equality.</p> <p>Paragraph 9 of the regulation also refers to the application of international conventions for women's rights.</p>
Sudanese Congress Party				<p>The terms equality of women and gender equality are not mentioned directly, but they are mentioned in the 'Principles, Goals and Means' section:</p> <p>(g) Work to implement the rights of women and children as in international conventions;</p> <p>(h) Work on a system of government that ensures the participation of society without discrimination and that recognizes the principle of citizenship as the basis for acquiring rights and obligations;</p> <p>(i) Ensure the rights of women and children and establish principles of social welfare.</p>

Continue Table 3

SPLM-N			<p>Manifesto</p> <p>6.2. Women's issues and gender discrimination</p> <p>Women remained 'the most marginalized among the marginalized' (Dr John Garang) and their suffering went beyond description; they suffered discrimination and inequality with men in the exercise of their political, economic, social and cultural rights. Women are subjected to a 'third' form of discrimination in terms of ethnicity, social status and gender. The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement party fights for equal rights and duties and non-discrimination against women and for removing all repressive laws that take away women's freedom and those that discriminate against women, while adopting a policy of discrimination in favour of women.</p> <p>Constitution</p> <p>Article: 98. Women's rights</p> <p>Taking into account the rights enshrined in regional and international conventions, women's rights are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Human dignity. 2) Equality with men in rights and duties. 3) Equal pay for equal work and other benefits. 4) Equality before the law. 5) Thirty per cent representation in the party organs and public institutions as positive discrimination, and the right to compete freely in the remaining 70 per cent. 6) Positive discrimination for women in education and public health. 7) The right to own property. 8) Strengthening women economically, socially, politically and culturally. 9) Ensuring the right of motherhood and childhood in accordance with the law. 10) Establishing institutions to protect and monitor the implementation of women's rights.
HAQ			<p>Constitution and Basic Principles</p> <p>Gender equity is stated as one of the party's main principles and objectives. Number 3 on the list of objectives states: 'Gender equality between women and men in human dignity and rights is based on the family, society and the state, in accordance with international conventions and agreements on human rights and on women; the party also adopts a policy of positive discrimination for women as one effective means of empowering women.'</p> <p>Chapter 4 mentions that every Sudanese man and Sudanese woman may become a member of the party when certain conditions are met.</p>

Continue Table 3

Republican Party	✓		Constitution	<p>The party's constitution does not specifically mention gender equality, but it refers to the principle of full equality between all citizens in rights and duties through economic, political and social equality.</p> <p>'The Republican Party's view of expanding the promotion of free individuals is a must in a good society, which is based on three pillars, including economic equality, and it begins with socialism, where the poor have a right, not charity.'</p> <p>Another pillar is social equality, where class, gender and colour, race and religious differences are erased.</p> <p>Section 1(7) – Principle 5</p> <p>The Republican Party works to protect and promote civil, political, economic and social rights.</p> <p>And the culture of Sudanese citizens takes into account the rights and freedoms of certain groups such as women and children, minorities and people with special needs.</p> <p>5) Equality before the law and equal protection are guaranteed by law to any human being without any distinction due to race or colour, gender, language, religion, political opinion, non-political affiliation, national origin, or social class, wealth, descent, disability, age or other factors.</p>
Binaa Sudan Party		✓		<p>Gender is not mentioned specifically, but the party does have a shadow government that includes 14 shadow ministers and senior state officials, four of these officials are women, holding the positions of shadow minister of defence, shadow minister of interior, head of the Department of the Environment and head of the Department of Culture and Art.</p>

There is marked variation in how the different parties address gender equality within their documents and structures. Approaches range from assigning specific quotas for women or assigning women to specific structures and advance to unpacking elements of discrimination and equality and addressing them explicitly, while some parties address both genders in a similar way and, by extension, equally. The latter approach fails to address gender gaps attributed to education, political history and skewed power relations which disadvantage women. An example can be seen in instances where advanced qualifications are set as a prerequisite for holding senior and leadership positions within a party's hierarchy. There are two objections that can be made against this requirement: (1) qualifications are mentioned only when addressing women, which means men are automatically qualified because they are men; and (2) making qualification a measure of one's fitness for a certain position again ignores the gender gap and the fact that women cannot qualify in a vacuum.

Legislated quotas and political party measures

Table 4 includes statements and quotations from political party documents that encompass procedures indicative of women's inclusion in party systems. These include provisions on affirmative action, such as quotas; the purposive appointment of women to certain leadership positions; the establishment of specific women-only committees, bureaus or sectors; and measures to address procedural challenges, including the removal of discriminatory laws and ensuring adherence to international standards on women's rights. In order to ensure representation, some political parties specifically appoint women to leadership positions if they are not elected or elevated by the normal procedures. However, this does not necessarily entail that women are assigned to decision-making or senior positions. The fact is that all but one of the selected parties are headed by men. In fact, it was also evident that, in practice, all three leadership positions in most parties are occupied by men.

Table 4. Quotas and other measures to empower women

Party	Quota		Appointment procedures		Election process		Other	Document	Text
	Available	Not available	Available	Not available	Available	Not available			
Umma Party	✓								Paragraph 2.13(d) refers to the representation of women and reads: 'Women are represented at all levels by a minimum of 25 per cent.' Paragraph 23(a) of the general provisions reads: 'Women are represented by at least 25 per cent in all the party's central, state and regional organs.' Paragraph 25 reads: 'A central women's bureau has been established from 14 regional bureaus.' The paragraph on state structure reads: 'The state congress consists of representatives of the various administrative units in the state, taking into account the quotas for women, groups, students and young people.'
Sudanese Communist Party							✓	Constitution	Women must be represented in the Central Committee and conferences, taking into account their capacity.
Democratic Unionist Party		✓		✓		✓			
Ba'ath Party		✓		✓		✓			

Continue Table 4

Beja Congress Party									Constitution	The party's constitution mentions that the party's leadership council is composed of 15 members, including 10 who are elected directly, and that one of them is the head of the women's secretariat.
Sudanese Congress Party					✓					It was noted that women are guaranteed representation at conferences. Article 31, Chapter 1 (Party institutions) reads: 'All conferences are held with a representation of at least 25 per cent women whenever possible.'
SPLM-N	✓		✓		✓				Positive discrimination policy	Article 82 (Constitution) (1) The Albuna Board consists of the President, his deputies, the secretary and 12 members with 30 per cent representation of women. (4) The President of the Council nominates two deputies for approval by the Council, one of whom must be a woman. The party Constitution in paragraph 2.6 mentions: 'While adopting affirmative actions, the People's Liberation Movement party fights for equal rights and obligations and non-discrimination against women, and for the removal of all repressive laws that take away women's freedom and those that discriminate against women.'

Continue Table 4

HAQ									
Republican Party		✓		✓		✓			No phrases mentioned with regard to this.
Binaa Sudan Party		✓		✓		✓		Available material on the party's website	

Capacity building and training

Almost all parties' structures include capacity-building and training sections for their members. Capacity building may be covered by a small unit in the human resources section, or it can be an independent section. Training includes orientation during the recruitment of new members, general training on party procedures and philosophy and, in some cases, tailored training targeting specific members. However, only 2 parties out of 10 have training targeting women and/or on gender issues. The party documents do not mention the content or details of this training or whether it is actually implemented (see Table 5). This means efforts to improve women's capacities within political parties are weak, which is attributable to the lack of gender analysis within the parties and/or a poor commitment to women's inclusion in party agendas.

Table 5. Capacity building and training

Party	Orientation for new members		Gender training		Training on gender (female/male member)		Text
	Available	Not available	Available	Not available	Available	Not available	
Umma Party		✓		✓		✓	The party structure includes a human resources unit.
Sudanese Communist Party			✓			✓	The word training is mentioned 11 times in the party programme in a general context (at the county level) and 3 times in the party constitution in the context of training for party members; training specifically for women and gender training are not mentioned.
Democratic Unionist Party		✓		✓		✓	
Ba'ath Party	✓		✓		✓		New members undergo a one-year period of training according to article 11(1) and (2) of section 2 of the Rules of Procedure: 1. 'Place the trainee member in a party cell appointed by the leadership.' 2. 'The duration of the training is one year, and the secretary of the competent cell has to report on the trainee member and propose that the trainee is to be transferred to the rank of active member or to renew the duration of his training for the same period of time.' Article 9(2) on the functions of the secretary of the Women's Secretariat refers to the training of women and reads: 'It seeks to involve as many people as possible in training courses to build women's capacities.' It is mentioned in the constitution that 'continuous training is essential for all members', but no specific training for women on gender is mentioned.

Adherence to international human rights and CEDAW

Table 6 presents an overview of the degree to which party documents imbed the international human rights framework and CEDAW in particular. All parties explicitly mention 'respect for the international human rights framework'. When it comes to CEDAW and other conventions and agreements related to women, only 3 out of the 10 parties call for immediate ratification of CEDAW. CEDAW and its related protocols in addition to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa are considered reference points for ensuring women's rights and non-discrimination by all international actors and governments that have ratified them. Therefore, the fact that most political parties do not mention CEDAW is an indicator of how genuine they are when they talk about ensuring women's rights and gender equality.

Table 6. International conventions

Party	Mentioned	Not mentioned	CEDAW in particular	Document	How it is stated
Umma Party	✓		NA	Constitution	Paragraph d of Chapter II (Principles, Objectives and Means) reads: 'Commitment to human rights enshrined in fundamental charters and international treaties'
				Chapter 6 Party foreign relations Article 27: The party exercises its international relations on the following grounds: Respect for international and regional conventions Chapter 10 Religion and politics The party programme refers to international conventions with the following statement: 'The Sudanese state's commitment to international conventions and covenants on human rights, war crimes and genocide, including those that prohibit torture, prohibit administrative detention and prohibit discrimination against national formations and women, include these charters in national laws and shall not pass legislation that contradicts or detracts from them.	
Sudanese Communist Party	✓		NA	Programme	
Democratic Unionist Party	✓		NA		Paragraph h of the objectives refers to the general adherence to international conventions without specific reference to women and reads: 'Commitment to the charters of the United Nations, the Arab League, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Congress.'
Ba'ath Party	✓		NA		

Continue Table 6

Beja Congress Party	✓		Yes	Constitution	Article 2 of the objectives on international conventions reads as follows: 'Respect for human rights as approved by international conventions' Article 3 of the Regulations, which covers the functions of the secretary of the Women's Secretariat, states: 'Working to activate [UN Security Council] resolution 1325 and ratification of CEDAW'.
Sudanese Congress Party	✓		NA	Constitution	International conventions are referred to in Chapter II(w): 'Work to implement the rights of women and children as in international conventions' Paragraph g of the same article reads: 'Strengthening the capabilities of the Sudanese human being and enabling them to enjoy basic rights in accordance with international law and conventions'
SPLM-N	✓		Yes	Constitution and manifesto	Article 8 of the Constitution (Principles): 'Respect for human and people's rights, ensuring fundamental freedoms and adhering to the principles of regional conventions' Article 98 of the Constitution (Women's Rights) opens with the paragraph: 'In this regard, the SPLM-N demands that Sudan join CEDAW' 'Chapter 6.3 of the manifesto reads'
HAQ	✓		NA	Constitution	The party's constitution mentions that gender equality should be ensured according to international conventions, and it also mentions positive gender discrimination for women's empowerment

Code of conduct/anti-harassment policy

Only one of the political parties surveyed has written safeguarding policies such as a code of conduct, a policy regulating behaviour, a policy on violence against women (VAW) or an anti-harassment policy. The female party members interviewed denied the existence of VAW or harassment of women within their parties. Such denials are weak because the reason for safeguarding policies is to prevent violence and protect women if it happens. Even when policies mentioned, for example, that members would be dismissed from their party for insulting or oppressing women or for engaging in sexual harassment, there are no written procedures on how to report or prove violence in any form in which it occurs.

Gender analysis of the focus group discussions

This section includes an analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions. Some reference will be made to party documents in terms of comparing theory to practice.

Gender sensitivity of political parties in the eyes of their female members

Female members of political parties interviewed expressed a wide range of opinions that focused mainly on their personal experience in their own party. The following points summarize the discussion with them.

- They all agreed that their parties were in transition following 30 years of oppression and a lack of democracy.
- They also agreed that all parties without exception were in the process of revising their constitutions, programmes, working methods and structures. They saw this revision as the first step towards their readiness for the upcoming election following the current transitional period.
- They also agreed that they were dissatisfied with their participation in their parties in terms of holding leadership positions, elevating the women's agenda in party programmes and plans, and their participation in decision-making processes. Some argued that holding a leadership position was not gender-specific and that their party did not intentionally favour men for leadership. Others argued that women had a shorter history of participation in political parties compared with men and that women would eventually compete for leadership in the future.
- They perceived political parties as a mirror reflecting all of society and that the same social norms, perceptions, assumptions and stereotypes that prevailed at the societal level also prevailed in political parties. This argument to justify the patriarchal nature of political parties indicates that women do not perceive their parties as agents for change in the direction of good governance and

democracy. For parties to go along with the prevailing negative social norms in relation to women, it means that improving party regulations and attitudes is subject to social change and not the reverse, which would be expected in a post-revolution period in which people are demanding justice, peace and freedom.

- Most of the women interviewed agreed that the old traditional parties were patriarchal in nature and that the inclusion of women or a women's agenda was not part of the basic building blocks of the parties; hence, they concluded that women were still perceived as an annex or as a category and not yet an integral part of the population.
- Attempts to mainstream gender or to include women are normally led by women, and men who trivialize women's issues and concerns usually look down on such efforts and consider them 'insufficiently political'. Therefore, some women in political parties hedge themselves by ignoring their own needs and preoccupations; furthermore, they become complicit with the men in complete denial of gender differences.
- They have different opinions with regard to affirmative action, including quotas. Some of them believe that affirmative action is necessary to bridge the gender gap and that it is useful as a temporary strategy. However, they also asserted that, as a number, quotas themselves might be useless or even harmful if not supported by resources and capacity building, and if they did not put women in leadership positions. On the other hand, some parties oppose quotas, calling them a 'scapegoat' to get rid of women's voices and concerns. Therefore, more work is needed to demystify the quota concept and its rationale. Furthermore, some parties do not believe in quotas or affirmative action because they believe that their regulations do not discriminate against women and that they provide the same opportunities regardless of gender. This opinion seemingly turns a blind eye to the prevalent gender gaps and gender power relations.
- All the women interviewed agreed that there must be a high degree of collaboration and coordination with the part of civil society focused on gender issues. They acknowledged the capacities and expertise among civil society, and they admitted that those who had joined CSOs had a better understanding of gender concepts and gender mainstreaming. Having said that, they also agreed that the level of trust between women in political parties and women in civil society was not strong to begin with and was getting weaker. This is attributed to two factors:
 - Women in civil society see themselves as more educated in human rights and women's rights; accordingly, they look down on female party members.
 - Young women in civil society perceive female leaders in political parties as part of an older generation holding on to and protecting patriarchal values and negative social norms.

- Some women agreed with their party's opinion that gender equality would be achieved automatically only if and when a democratic national government prevailed.

Gender equality within political parties, as perceived by young party members

The discussion group for young party members was rich and interesting in so many ways. Two elements contributed to this: first, the group included female and male members; and second, they were all young and did not hold leadership positions—except one male—in their respective parties. The discussion was more frank, open and elaborative. The discussion can be summarized as follows:

- Agreeing that the transition period is sensitive and critical and that it must be a gateway to democratic transition, most political parties, especially those currently active, are not ready for the upcoming election, and it is disturbing to see that they are not aware of the fact that the election is approaching and that they have to be prepared organizationally and programmatically as well as in terms of cadres and training. Otherwise, their eligibility for the election will be at risk. The internal democracy of the political parties was also questioned, and parties need to work on democratizing structures and attitudes before they contest the election. To do this, they must acknowledge their need for training and capacity building.
- With regard to the situation of women within political parties and the response to women's issues, the participants asserted that the revolution brought women back to their normal status in history as equal to men; however, they still suffer from injustice, and their political participation even within political parties is weak especially in leadership positions. All the participants said that women must be taken into consideration within political parties and must hold leadership positions at all levels and that their active participation must be acknowledged and supported.
- The political landscape in the current transformation does not provide solid ground for women, who still have to struggle at the level of political participation in the current Sovereign Council and in the cabinet of ministers, where the number of women is small and unsatisfactory. The struggle to form the Legislative Council and the pressure to preserve the 40 per cent quota agreed in the constitutional document are still mounting in order to obtain this quota. Even within political parties, the percentages of women in leadership positions are very small, and their participation is nominal, symbolic and without impact. Women alone overwhelmingly shoulder the burden of seeking gender equality and equal participation; support from male party members for women's campaigns and demands barely exists.

- Almost all political parties are talking about the undeniable participation of women in the revolution; this is increasingly becoming a catchphrase, and it is misleading because, in practice, political parties are not nominating women for leadership positions, which they frequently justify with the excuse of 'inefficiency and lack of qualifications'.
- The participants emphasized that training was needed on the importance of women's participation, to educate the parties and their members on women's political participation and with special focus on women's political participation within parties in order to have the ability and experience to participate on different state levels.
- Training women, improving their political abilities and competencies, providing real models for women and ensuring that women have the ability to participate and have an impact at all levels.
- It is necessary to differentiate between women's political participation and participation within political parties, because of political and societal backgrounds facing women's issues—for example, CEDAW has received very little support from political parties and not enough to improve the situation of women in general and not just in the parties.
- Concerning quotas, positive discrimination has its positive and negative aspects and can be considered a step forward to achieve a better position on women's issues and their political participation. Believing in the quota system depends largely on women to defend and to consider it as a priority in their demands. Some of the young party members criticized affirmative action and quotas, which they called 'intentional misleading discrimination'. 'It must be [avoided] completely at all levels of power, whether it [be] legislative or sovereign or the cabinet, because it is ineffective; it is a discriminative strategy that does not serve women's issues, but rather it causes more harm.'
- Political parties must be committed to women's issues and gender equality and to women's participation at all levels internally or externally, and female members should not accept the current situation within the parties and should make a clear demand for a better situation and not just accept what is available if it does not serve them or their causes in any way.
- Civil society should support political parties, especially women within the parties, including through training programmes and raising awareness of women's rights and other issues; such training and expertise are lacking within political parties.
- Parties must have gender units and must adopt gender policies within their structures to build the capacities of women and men on women's rights, gender equality and other gender-related issues and to raise awareness within parties of women's issues and problems and find solutions to them, among other issues.
- Women in leadership positions and older women fail to confront the patriarchal agenda of political parties, including the fact that the leaders of

all political parties are all men, and even if there are women, there are very few of them, and their presence is symbolic. Women's acceptance of marginal and insignificant positions is one of the reasons why women are left behind, even though some of them are much better than men in leadership positions. Party practices (in meetings and negotiations) are not considerate of the presence of women, which means only a small number of women take part. Furthermore, the political environment is not friendly to women at all levels. Therefore, we need to redefine how politics is conducted and to reduce the cost of participating in political practice—for example, using online meetings in place of working late hours or in locations that cannot be accessed by women. Hence, party programmes must be changed and developed, which will help to change the social framework and the social reality by recognizing that women face real problems in terms of harassment in public and in terms of their political participation; party programmes must recognize these problems and seek to solve them. Young people need to respect the slogan of 'respect, appreciate, reward' and translate it into practice and actions.

Gender sensitivity of political parties in the eyes of civil society

The group of women who participated in the civil society focus group discussion are very active in defending women's rights and gender equality. They are strong advocates for the realization of a civil democratic state and call for women's political participation. They are all active members of CSOs and of women's networks and coalitions. They are all non-partisan.

Civil society opinion on political parties

- There are no political parties ready at the moment; the absence of 30 years of political activity, despite the changes that took place during that period and the passage of three generations, resulted in a big change in all walks of life. There must be political action that suits the stage.
- The political parties that existed in 1989 were put on hold and were reactivated during the revolution in 2018.
- The political parties are not ready: their members and cadres are very old, and their structures and programmes have not changed and have not developed in a way that suits the present time or the new generation.
- The political parties are not ready for any kind of activities or actions that can keep pace with the current situation; they are focused on the polarization of their membership and not on the content of developing programmes or their readiness for elections; they are all focusing on the crowd.
- The focus is on polarization and not on the structural status of the party or on the fact that their programmes and their methods have not been updated, or on the lack of readiness within the youth base and tense relations with party leaders.

- Women within the parties do not work on elections or the problems they face; their focus is also on the polarization of the membership and popularity only.
- All parties are reacting to current events.
- The current form of parties is regular in that it is based on certain foundations and an agreement on a particular ideology or, opinion or programme and the vision of a particular political programme. 'Are there real political parties that can be called parties, without realistic programmes? Most of them are devoted to family loyalties and not keeping up with political changes.'

Female civil society activists: parties and their response to women's issues

- The difference between slogans and the practice of women within political parties. The slogans used in the democratic transition and what women actually do within political parties are contradictory.
- Political parties are opposed to the democratic transition in the country, and the political parties do not communicate clearly with the civil society activists; their programmes and terms are also unclear.
- Women were nominated, and Faisal Mohammed Saleh, the government spokesperson, said that women did not have the competencies for such positions.
- Parties' lack of a clear vision, the lack of innovation in their programmes and discourse, their failure to mention women's issues or the idea of women's participation—this mentality must change within the parties.
- Women must leave parties that do not adopt their issues. The weakness of women within these parties allows them to defend the party agenda and not the women's agenda. By doing so the women will maintain their positions within these parties.
- Women are strong outside political parties, but at home they cannot express their opinions; inside their parties, they cannot put their issues in party platforms or structures—for example, a policy on harassment within the party.
- Women in parties have a specific ceiling that cannot be crossed, and women's issues cannot be raised within these parties.
- The number of women within these parties is unknown, and women in leadership positions are not interested in including the women's agenda or in having gender-sensitive policies or gender-sensitive parties.

Political parties' response to women's issues

- There must be a lobby within parties to support and assist with women's issues and foreign assistance from CSOs.
- The existing parties do not meet the aspirations of women or the women's agenda. The parties in their current form offer no solutions—it is a vicious circle.

- Civil society should help provide training on abuse within political parties, and help change the law on parties and elections to ensure that women's issues are taken into account. And there should be a loud voice within these parties.
- International organizations should be pressured to support and strengthen political parties with full programmes.
- There is a sense of hostility between women's parties and civil society that makes it very difficult to work in this area.
- There must be dialogue and joint thinking to work together; civil society should act as party advisors.
- The problem is that women's voices within political parties are inaudible or ineffective.
- Women must be educated, and there needs to be a strong and conscious group and base for women's issues within the parties and a body that defends food vendors and marginalized women—displaced women—with disabilities so that they are not exploited by the parties.
- Women are keen to keep their privileges within political parties and are not interested in feminist issues.
- It is necessary to train small groups of young women, because the adults in the parties are not serious and do not accept these groups or allow them to work or express their vision within the system.
- Parties are training women to be ashamed of issues, but women need to stand up to them.
- There should be a focus on parties' young members and training them on women's issues because they are expected to be active as change agents.
- There must be a large social movement for women's rights, and the role of civil society is to raise awareness and educate.
- The women's bloc MANSAM, which includes all segments of political parties and other blocs' coordinators, is a very useful platform for advancing women's rights and women's political participation.
- Feminism must be strong; and female feminists should be working with women from the parties and helping them to get out of their comfort zone and continue to work together and create alliances.
- The relationship between MANSAM and political organizations is not binding, but it is possible to work through the representatives of these organizations for training.
- In the 1990s the idea of a women's party was put forward and rejected; it was very difficult to have a women's party because there was no common ground or an agreement on a minimum agenda that would help women to come together as a political party.
- The formation of women's groups on women's issues contributes to the formation, creation and presentation of independent elements.

As independent actors, CSOs can be an important outside lever to support government, parties and individual efforts to end violence against women in political parties. CSOs can:

- promote gender equality in society at large and within political parties, including the message that women belong in politics and in all realms of society;
- implement sustained and systematic gender-awareness training and capacity-building programmes that explicitly include VAW in political parties and that target both men and women at all levels and structures of political parties;
- advocate for laws and regulations to protect women from violence in political parties, including laws outlawing all forms of VAW and changes to the political party law to include VAW in political parties, quotas and other temporary special measures; and
- compile and publish gender-disaggregated data on party membership, participation, representation and influence on party decision-making and programmes.

Political parties' gender sensitivity as perceived by young non-members

This group comprised female and male youth activists who have been active in resistance groups and other youth-led groups and networks. They were all very active during the revolution and the sit-in in Khartoum where thousands of Sudanese people sat in the central military yards for more than three months awaiting the formation of the transitional government. They are also advocating for a secular state and for the removal of all discriminatory laws and customs that curtail their active engagement as responsible citizens. Their opinions are summarized in the following points:

- Parties do not have clear visions of an electoral plan; there is no party offering a clear programme for the post-transition period. They are still trapped in criticizing the previous regime; they are still acting like opposition parties and are focusing on their participation in the current transitional government. They are not reaching out to recruit new members, and there are no strategies or programmes to support the current or post-transition period.
- Most parties are old and dogmatic and based on looking down on women and youth. No new parties are emerging to compete or replace traditional ones. The internal democracy of such parties is highly questionable.
- Most parties are either polarized (left and right) or they rely on religious sects. It is true that they suffered from 30 years of repression, intimidation, arrests and restricted movement. Therefore, they need to start afresh and rebuild their constituencies and policies. Few parties now reach out to citizens in neighbourhoods or work with the resistance committees. However, this is not

enough, and half of the transitional period has already elapsed.

- There is a new party, Binaa Sudan Party, that looks different in terms of its vision and strategies, which are based on contextual analysis, but it is still a small party with limited membership.
- To change the situation, the young members of political parties introduced the power of pragmatism—relying on studies, strategies and data—and set strategic goals that can be measured and that can address the street and the role of the party in changing the country.
- They propose the establishment of a large youth platform where leadership training is provided and youth leaders emerge to lead the political transformation in the country and to challenge the political parties.
- Grassroots awareness with a focus on women and youth may be one way to convince political parties to be inclusive of women and youth.
- Women are excluded in many ways and at various levels. Political participation is one area, but it is closely linked to social norms and the traditional gender division of roles and responsibilities. However, the current legal framework is also contributing to gender inequality.
- The media is not playing a significant role in promoting gender equality, and in many cases it contributes to reinforcing inequality and stereotyping of women.
- They appreciate the initiative of establishing a gender unit and a gender policy by the Sudanese Congress Party; this is a positive step, but it is still a beginning, and the result and impact of this policy on the progress of gender equality within the party is still to be seen.
- Women in political parties do not discuss the issues and problems they face as women, and when they do so, they do not associate incidents of VAW and harassment with the party they belong to. The representation of women within political parties is only symbolic and token, and that may be why they were not able to position the women's agenda and gender equality within party documents and culture. But there are young women in the parties who support the 50 per cent for women campaign.
- They expect traditional women's structures such as the SWU to be more active and claim back its history and increase its membership all over the country.
- Women have a large presence as members of parties, but their chance to lead or influence the party agenda is minimal and is hindered by the internalized culture of male superiority.
- They need to feminize political parties and at the same time politicize women. These two concepts work together as a means and an end at the same time.

Gender analysis of the in-depth interviews

Quantitative analysis

Seventeen interviews were conducted with male and female members from various parties, the majority of whom were between the ages of 26 and 70. Over 50 per cent of the respondents held leadership positions within their respective parties, and less than 5 per cent were members of women-only units in the party (Figure 4). The fact that so many of the respondents were party leaders may explain the defensive tone in their responses, as any criticism of their parties might be seen as criticizing their leadership abilities. Moreover, although the majority of respondents indicated that they were recruited into the political parties through social networks, 34 per cent stated that friends of party leaders acted as gatekeepers (Figure 5).

Figure 1. Specialized committees and leadership position

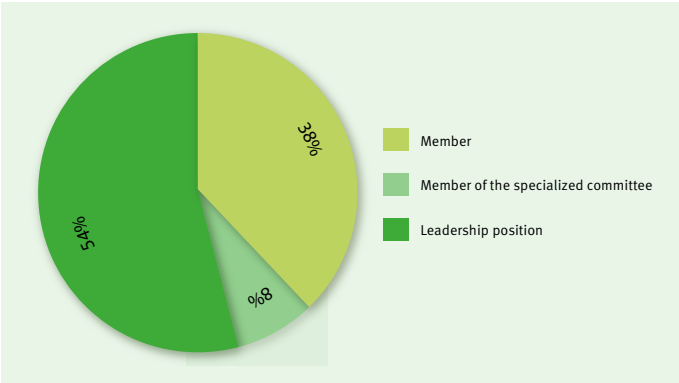


Figure 2. Entry points for recruitment into the party

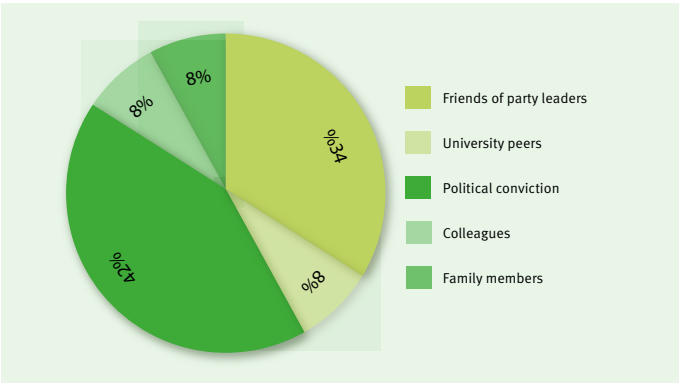
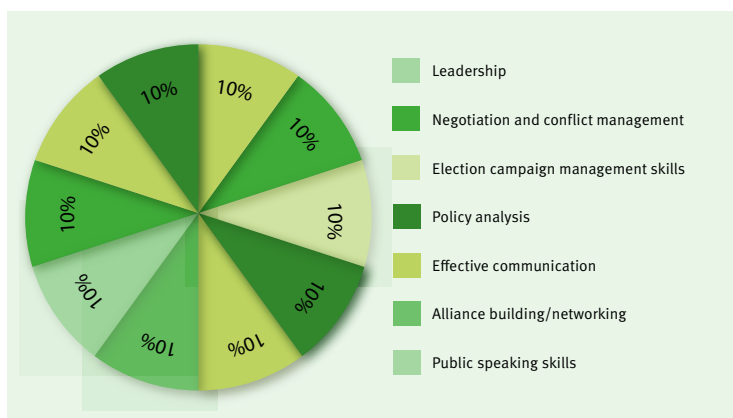
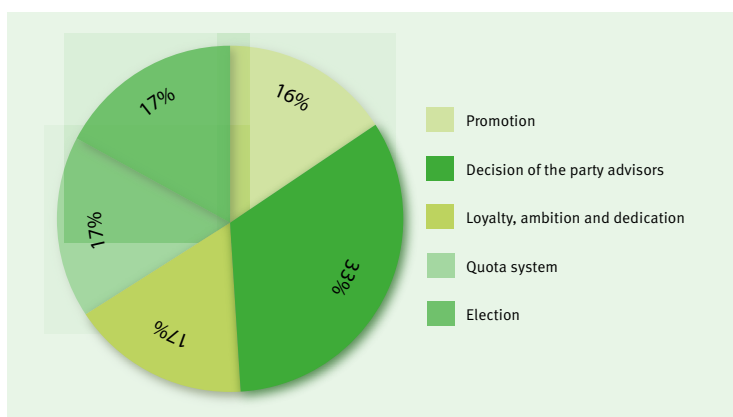


Figure 3. Types of training needed to empower women



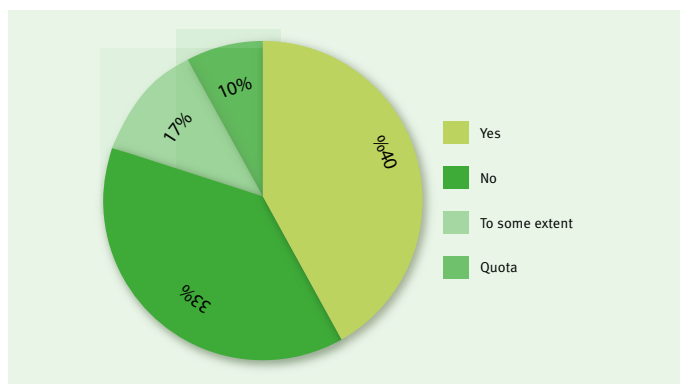
Around 50 per cent of the respondents stated that their party did not provide any training for women. This percentage supports the findings from the analysis of the documents, where it was clear that tailored training for women was not happening across parties. The respondents asserted that there was a need for capacity building and identified 10 areas where training was needed (see Figure 6).

Figure 4. How are members assuming leadership positions within the party?



More than 30 per cent of respondents stated that leadership positions within their parties were appointed by leading party advisors, while the quota system, general elections and equal competition each accounted for 17 per cent of appointments. Furthermore, half of the respondents stated that procedures were applied in a transparent manner, and the other half said that they were not and that transparency was not guaranteed.

Figure 5. Do women and men have equal opportunities to hold different positions within the party?



Although more than 40 per cent of respondents stated that women had equal opportunities to hold senior positions in the party, around 33 per cent stated otherwise, while 17 per cent were undecided.

Qualitative analysis

The respondents gave the following answers concerning how their respective parties normally develop their documents and programmes:

- conferences and meetings;
- through specialized committees, reviewing the full membership across its different sectors and providing criticism to improve the development of programmes;
- regular meetings, discussions;
- by analysing and understanding the political and social reality;
- through ongoing workshops and discussion sessions;
- through training courses and consultation conferences;
- by reviewing the work plan every three months;
- through specialized committees for studies at the level of the political bureau and the general secretariat, with a specialized committee for studies in each sector; and
- based on the proposals or participation of members and according to the latest political and public opinion.

With regard to the inclusion of statements about women's empowerment, the following answers were given:

- Yes, the party's political documents, which stipulated that women's participation should be guaranteed at 50 per cent or more as a party goal.
- The party has always advocated the need to empower women and ensure their participation in all aspects of the party and has provided encouragement to ensure gender equality and that a certain percentage of women are involved in making decisions.
- Yes, the issue of women is one of the issues that the party is fighting for.
- Yes, as evidenced by the fairness of the party's leadership.
- Yes, party politics contains clear points for women to be included in public work.
- Yes, the constitution provides for women's rights.
- Yes, for example, the participation rate of women in the structures of the People's Movement was raised to 40 per cent at the Juba Leadership Conference in October 2019, and a recommendation was made at the general conference to raise it to 50 per cent.
- Yes, the leadership conference recommended raising the participation of women in party structures to 50 per cent instead of 40 per cent.
- Yes, the party first opened up participation and began offering training and capacity building.

Are women represented in the party's leadership structures? If yes, please mention the positions that are occupied by women:

- Central Committee;
- yes, Cities Central Committee and Political Bureau;
- yes, secretary of the Gender Policy Secretariat, deputy secretary of Political Affairs, deputy secretary of the Secretariat for Human Rights, chairperson of the Independent Students Conference's TSI Committee, member of the political bureau;
- yes, Party Leadership Council;
- yes, we have female representatives on the leadership board;
- yes, the secretary general of the party is a woman; the secretary of finance, and the student office was supervised by a woman; the Council of Elders is represented by a number of women, and each woman has more party functions than men because women are more capable of holding more than one position;
- yes, there are women represented within the leadership structures: the Political Bureau (legislative body), the rapporteur of the political bureau, members within the political bureau—at least 30 per cent currently—deputies within the political council, the vice president, the secretary-general; and
- yes, the central committee, the political office, specialized committees, branches, political officials, foundation committees or directorates.

Despite the fact that some women are represented in leadership positions, they still face several challenges and barriers, particularly with regard to gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all party structures and programmes. The respondents described these challenges as follows:

- prevalent negative social norms;
- a socialization process that favours men;
- women's lack of awareness of their rights and role in politics;
- subordination of women and the dominance of a patriarchal culture;
- traditions and customs;
- stereotyping of women's roles (inside the home);
- the male-dominated political party culture;
- lack of training for women;
- the lack of sensitivity in dealing with women's issues and their responsibilities at home—such as caring for children and others as well as working outside the home—is a factor;
- failure to create equal opportunities throughout history and discrimination against women, which limits their ability to compete; and
- the negative beliefs of the society we live in.

The respondents think that what needs to be improved to enable women to take leadership and decision-making roles in their party includes the following:

- awareness of the need to increase the proportion of women and involve them in public work;
- working on improving the party's constitution and programme to include and consider the social environment, which to a greater extent defines gender roles and responsibilities;
- encourage women's participation by having active members and a feminist consciousness;
- knowledge and ability to analyse and summarize party systems and to take responsibility for decisions;
- competition open at all levels depending on qualifications, presence and contributions;
- a real belief in the concept of equality since the founding of the party and the practice of the republican sisters supports and directs this activity;
- the party's adoption of a strategy that increases the participation and training of women within the party and in society;
- the ability to understand work and issues; and
- the ability to develop programmes that are attractive to women and present them to the media so that everyone is aware of them.

When asked if the parties have an anti-harassment policy, some answers ranged from being defensive, such as ‘we are known at all levels to be respectful and never have harassment in the party’, to ‘we don’t have written procedures, but we have zero tolerance for harassment’ and ‘we don’t have [a policy], and it is high time to acknowledge the importance of such policies’.

The respondents provided a long list of suggestions to improve women’s positions and the positioning of the women’s agenda in their parties. This list includes the following:

- continue the struggle, no going back;
- increase awareness for both men and women; urge women to take leadership positions in order to reach out to local communities;
- review women’s issues inside and outside the party and give them more attention and discuss them more, and eliminate the contradiction between what is stated in the documents and the practice at all levels with regard to women’s issues;
- more training to keep up with the political reality, forging alliances with women’s parties to promote and achieve the feminist agenda, equal training opportunities for women and men, and women’s advocacy for one another;
- disseminate the ideas and issues that matter to the nation;
- freedom from male domination in society;
- develop policies and encourage women’s participation, albeit by allocating quotas to them and educating society on the need for women’s participation;
- community awareness;
- raise awareness of the need for women’s participation in political life;
- put women in decision-making positions;
- parties should adopt strategies that increase the participation and training of women within the party and in society, and they should develop policies to ensure women’s access to decision-making positions within the party;
- develop programmes that are attractive to women and present them to the media so that everyone is aware of them;
- reach 50 per cent women’s participation in legislative and executive bodies;
- develop gender policies;
- promote the role of women in society; provide equal training and promotion opportunities;
- amend laws and ratify CEDAW and other international agreements; and
- apply affirmative action and unpack what is meant by quotas and why they are necessary.

Conclusion

Following 30 years of oppressive dictatorship, Sudan's old political parties suffer from fragmentation, rusted constitutions and programmes and a hazy relationship with their constituencies. One of the justifications for having a rather long transitional period was to give political parties a chance to rebuild by updating their policies and structures to take into consideration the changing context in Sudan and the aspirations of the young generation for democracy and good governance. Therefore, almost all the parties included in this study are in the process of preparing to convene their general conferences in the near future. A serious review and update of their policies and programmes is expected if they intend to remain relevant. This change process affected access to party documents for this study.

Political parties are considered gatekeepers to women's access to leadership at the political level. Therefore, women's empowerment and gender equality must be mainstreamed and put into practice at the level of political parties. The institutionalization of gender equality is critical if men and women are to enjoy equal political rights and opportunities in practice. Increasing the number of women in political parties will not automatically achieve this institutionalization, although engaging more women in the political sphere should remain a key goal for women's political empowerment. In the absence of institutionalized structures, policies, programmes and processes that ensure gender equality, it is important to achieve a critical mass of 40 per cent women's representation in politics as stipulated by the CD so that women can have a voice to advocate for institutional and policy change in their favour.

Despite the fact that almost all party constitutions and programmes refer to women's inclusion in one way or another, provisions on women's inclusion are not translated into action even when women hold specific offices, and the realization of gender equality is still far-fetched. The behaviour of the current parties included in the FFC is a clear indicator that the nomination of women for office is still token.

It was evident that the low participation of women is part of the broader issue of cultural factors and negative social norms that are entrenched within and perpetuated

by political party regulations, systems, practices, procedures and a leadership hierarchy dominated by men. Respondents indicated that the history and practice of most political parties included in this study were patriarchal and hence male-dominated.

This situation persists despite the fact that the CD grants women equal rights. This disparity between theory and practice raises fundamental questions of social justice, whereby women make up the half of the electorate but only a small number of elected leaders. It also has negative effects on future generations, as ongoing imbalances in opportunities can affect the prospects for social and economic development in the longer term.

As men dominate leadership structures in political parties and still make up the majority of representatives in most government and FFC structures, they remain essential actors for implementing change. The commitment and political will of party leaders has to be sought and ensured if women's issues and the women's agenda are to be given as much consideration as those of men.

When women find a chance to be in leadership, it means they enter a male-dominated environment and culture. Conducting a review of political parties' procedures through gender audits and assessments can help identify the specific challenges women face in advancing their careers and highlight what needs to be done to make representative institutions more gender-friendly. However, some women in leadership prefer to go along with the prevalent culture in fear of replacement or, sometimes, because they themselves are not gender-sensitive enough to lead the change.

The existence of dual legal systems—customary and religious law on the one hand and formal law on the other—often means that women's rights are compromised due to customary and religious interpretations and application of the laws in Sudan. This is clearly reflected in the current PSA, the Criminal Code and other discriminatory laws. The PSA in particular is compromising women's political participation and putting up barriers to all opportunities for career development and promotion.

Female members of political parties seem to adopt a defensive attitude to the notion of sexism within their parties, which means discrimination against women in political parties is not entirely denied, but women and men in political parties maintain a distance between themselves and the existence of sexism. This distancing is sometimes clear when respondents favourably compare their own parties to other parties. Members use the concept of equality as a way to deny accounts of inequality and claim that their political party should be viewed as a discrimination-free environment. In certain cases respondents seemed to trivialize discrimination against women and perceived it as acceptable because political parties are part and parcel of the whole prevalent patriarchy in Sudan. This trivialization is serious because it indicates that

women are also internalizing the same culture and are willing not to challenge the normalized discourse.

Civil society organizations, including women's organizations, can strategically target female party activists to advocate for their desired policy changes. CSOs are able to generate public demand for reform, thereby putting pressure on political parties and governments to bring their practices and procedures into line with international and national standards. CSOs can support women's political advancement through recruitment initiatives, capacity building for female candidates, awareness raising to combat gender-based stereotypes of women in politics and evidence-based research to facilitate the introduction or amendment of policy and legislative agendas in support of gender equality. However, for CSOs to play this role, they must work hard to restore trust by building bridges with political parties through respect, dialogue and active communication. At this point in Sudan's history, there is little trust between women in civil society and women in political parties, and this is causing harm to the overall women's agenda and the cooperation and collaboration needed to advance women's political participation and democracy.

The majority of young people believe that parties adopt and talk about gender equality rhetorically, and this may be the trickiest aspect of ensuring gender equality in political parties, and it may be harmful. The parties will support women's political advancement if it is politically beneficial, but not necessarily out of principle or conviction. Young people believe that Sudanese parties in general may openly promote gender equality while, behind closed doors, undermining women's chances of participation by exercising influence over party decision-making processes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the government

1. Provide specific measures to achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies.
2. Translate the provisions in the CD into working laws and commissions, including the women and gender equality commission, the election commission and the political party law.
3. Effect a provision to make affirmative action mandatory for all political parties in Sudan.
4. Ratify and effectuate CEDAW and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, as Sudan has an obligation to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and structural measures.
5. Encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced participation in public office at all levels of decision-making.
6. Develop and introduce where necessary open and participatory processes that enhance the participation of women and men in all phases of developing legislation, programmes and policies.
7. Establish legal protections for the rights of women on an equal basis with men and ensure through competent justice systems effective protection of women against any form of discrimination.

Recommendations for political parties

1. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework and carry out periodic gender audits on the representation and participation of men and women in politics and decision-making positions.
2. Develop and strengthen policies, legal provisions and programmes to ensure progressive attainment of equal representation of men and women in political parties and in public office.

3. Develop and improve internal regulations and make sure they are gender-sensitive and responsive to women's needs.
4. Design tailored capacity-building programmes targeting women and men and support initiatives, including resource mobilization efforts that promote women in politics and other structures.
5. Put in place affirmative action measures (a zipped quota) in areas where gender inequalities exist.
6. Invest in the elimination of negative cultural and traditional customs that inhibit equal participation of men and women in local governance and other grassroots structures.
7. Work on creating a conducive and gender-sensitive party workplace and introduce procedures that cover the time and location of meetings.
8. Work on portraying positive images of women rather than focusing on the idea that women are not capable of political work.

Recommendations for female leaders in political parties

1. Acknowledge the existence of gender-based discrimination within political parties as a first step to addressing the challenge, and work progressively towards achieving gender equality.
2. Institutionalize gender equality in political party statutes, policies and codes of conduct. It is important to institutionalize gender equality as a principle and value governing how a party operates, particularly in core party documents such as constitutions.
3. Initiate the development of policies regarding the conduct and behaviour of party members, including codes of conduct or policies prohibiting discrimination and sexual harassment. These policies must include clear reporting and accountability procedures.
4. Adopt a strategy of mentoring other women within a party. Political mentorship can be defined as a supportive relationship established between two persons to share experience, skills and knowledge, and to help address challenges in their political careers. Mentorship is more useful if seen as a two-way relationship in which both individuals benefit. It can also narrow the widening generation gap between old and young members.
5. Build alliances and solidarity within the party. Women portray themselves as effective communicators and connectors. However, men are also effective builders of political networks, often through informal means, so they must be involved.
6. Use soft diplomacy and closed-door conversations with those in power to promote women's advancement within the party and address any honest concerns party members and leaders may have such as the potential loss of power.

7. Encourage initiatives for enhancing assertiveness and leadership confidence in young women to ensure equal participation in leadership.
8. Cooperate with women across party lines. In addition to building solidarity and dialogue among women within parties, women can also work across party lines on issues of common concern. For example, women can cooperate across party lines to raise awareness of gender-based violence in society.
9. Build bridges of solidarity among gender-equality advocates (both women and men). It is important to identify and get to know both allies and opponents in promoting gender equality within a party. Who among the party leadership is a ‘gender champion’ or supporter of gender equality? Who opposes it and why? Women should identify both male and female party members that support gender equality.
10. Identify and promote potential female candidates and leaders in the political sphere—this is vital given the low representation of women in politics, especially at decision-making levels. Women may consider creating and sharing databases of potential candidates with other women in their parties in order to expand the pool of eligible women for political advancement.
11. Encourage women of different identities, backgrounds and levels of experience to join parties. This will enrich parties and reduce centralization and domination, while also opening up possibilities to expand the scope and vision of the parties.
12. Youth members should open up opportunities for engagement, advocate for their representation, provide alternatives, claim respect and validate their role. Alienating themselves from the party will not solve the problem.

Recommendations for CSOs and activists

1. Work more on educating citizens on the concept of gender. Gender equality is still misunderstood in many parts of Sudan. It is difficult to prioritize in the policy agenda a concept that not everyone—particularly politicians, decision-makers and policymakers—understands.
2. Work seriously on building bridges of trust between women in civil society and women in political parties through the establishment of joint committees/bodies. Realize that democracy cannot be built without political parties, and supporting female members is an obligation if the call for plural democracy is genuine.
3. Invest in enhancing the capacities of young people as future leaders of government, particularly on issues of civic education, democratization processes, gender equality and women’s rights.
4. Work closely with the media to change negative images of women by changing the current narrative that portrays women as weak and powerless.
5. Work more on power analysis to identify the root causes of gender inequality;

to reconstruct, we first have to deconstruct.

6. Continue to advocate and lobby for women's rights and equality through joint pressure campaigns with female party members.
7. Build issue-based alliances and solidarity across horizontal and vertical lines.
8. Challenge party leaders and provide them with evidence of the benefit of having more women in politics. Women in civil society are more suitable to playing this role because they will not be subject to later intimidation or targeting and have nothing to lose.
9. Provide women with training on how to prevent and respond to acts of violence against them and/or their family members.

Recommendations for the UN, international non-governmental organizations and donors

1. Provide technical and financial support for women in political parties to enhance their capacities and negotiating power.
2. Support the government in promoting women's rights and gender equality.
3. Support civil society women's groups and activists who promote women's rights and political participation.
4. Reach out to youth structures and groups and provide them with training and direct support.
5. Help design training manuals on democracy and good governance.
6. Target political party leaders and expose them to experiences where women's political participation is beneficial to the party, to the country and to sustaining democracy.
7. Support research based on feminist methodology to enhance women's political participation.

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Annex

Gender Assessment of Political Parties’ Internal Regulations

Interview for political parties

Basic interview information:

- 1. Date of the interview
- 2. Name of the interviewer
- 3. Name of the interviewee
- 4. Political party

Introductory questions:

- 1. Please introduce yourself.
.....
.....
.....
- 2. What is the official party name?
- 3. Age group
18–25
26–39
40–49
50–59
60–69
70+
- 4. What is your highest level of education achieved?
.....
- 5. What is your position in the party?
.....

Policy framework:

1. Does the party have a written constitution, manifesto, programme or plan of action?

If yes, does it address equal gender participation? Please clarify.

.....

.....

.....

2. Does the party policy framework mention any statements about women's empowerment?

If yes, clarify.

.....

.....

.....

3. Is the language in the constitution/manifesto gender-sensitive?

.....

Structures:

1. What is the party leadership structure?

.....

2. Does your party have written criteria for selecting people for new positions?

Yes

Describe them.

.....

.....

.....

No

What are the general norms or criteria?

.....

3. What is the process for selecting people for new positions?

.....

4. Are women represented in the leadership structure?

.....

5. If yes, please list the position or positions held by women.

.....

.....

.....

6. Do you think there are some factors that hinder women's involvement in political parties?

.....
If yes, what are these factors?

Factors relating to the women (e.g. qualifications, training, nature)

.....
.....
.....

Factors relating to the party

.....
.....
.....

Factors relating to the women's family and community

.....
.....
.....

If no, which factors do you think promote their involvement?

.....
.....
.....

7. Has the party taken any actions to enable women to overcome such hindering factors?

.....
.....
.....

8. What are the factors (in your party) that allow women to be promoted or obtain leadership positions?

.....
.....
.....

9. How would you rate your party for women's participation in comparison with levels of women's leadership in the country?

.....
.....

10. Do you think women's participation can bring benefits to the political party? If yes, what benefits?

.....
.....
.....

11. Do you think women's leadership within the political party has any effects on the party?

If yes, please specify.

.....

.....

.....

Policies and procedures:

1. Are there any written policies that support or hinder women's participation?

Yes ()

No ()

If yes, please elaborate and provide the policy document if there is a written policy.

.....

.....

.....

2. Is there a women's wing, committee, league, etc.?

If yes, how do you think it promotes or hinders women's participation?

.....

.....

.....

3. Is there any written policy or legislation that tackles sexual harassment?

If yes, please provide the document.

How does the party deal with such issues? Please elaborate.

.....

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4. Are there any regulations that ensure equal treatment for men and women?

Yes. If written, please submit the relevant document. If not written, please clarify.

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5. Does the party promote a positive image of female politicians when developing messages for the media?

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6. Does the party provide any facilities that help women accompany their children?
If yes, please specify.

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Recommendations:

What are your suggestions for improving gender balance and improving women's political participation in your party through the following?

1. Policy framework—constitution/manifesto

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2. Structures

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3. Policies and procedures

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4. Action plans

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About the author

Asha Elkarib (PhD) joined the democratic women's movement in Sudan when she was 18 years old. Asha received a BSc (Honours) in rural economy from the University of Khartoum and a PhD from the University College of Wales Aberystwyth (UK). Her studies in the field of rural economy and work as a researcher have helped her get closer to the realities of rural women in a conflict-torn country and have greatly influenced her activism. She is a cofounder and the current chair of the Board of Directors of the Sudanese Organization for Research and Development in Sudan, a civil society organization working for peace and democracy with a focus on gender justice. Before that, Asha was the director and methodology advisor for the international organization ACORD. As a researcher and an activist in Sudan, Asha has conducted several research studies with a special focus on discriminative laws against women and the impact of conflict on gender roles in Sudan. Asha has participated in several international and regional events addressing human and women's rights.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work. International IDEA provides analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge on good international democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

Where do we work?

Our headquarters is located in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

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Political parties are considered gatekeepers for women's access to political positions of power, as they play an important role in institutionalizing women's inclusion in politics. Ensuring that political parties in Sudan play an active role in the advancement of gender equality and the enhancement of women's political participation is particularly important as Sudan prepares for its transition to democracy.

This '*Gender-Assessment of Political Parties' Internal Regulations in Sudan*' examines political parties' internal policies and structures and their impact on women's access to positions of power and decision-making at all levels, starting from within the political parties themselves. By scrutinizing parties' constitutions, manifestos and various policy documents, the report highlights how women participate in political parties and the extent to which political parties support gender equality.



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ISBN: 978-91-7671-440-9 (print)
978-91-7671-441-6 (pdf)