

**SOCIAL NORMS AND BARRIERS ANALYSIS FOR
AGRO-PASTORALIST WOMEN AND GIRLS
IN SOUTH DARFUR, SUDAN:
TRENDS OF CHANGE IN A COMPLEX CONTEXT?**

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ACRONYMS AND NOTES

ACRONYMS

BDS	Business Development Services
CIS	Care International Switzerland
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FG	Focus group
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation (or Female Genital Cutting (FGC))
FHHs	Households headed by females, with men absent due to divorce or death (includes widows and divorcees)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NRM	Natural Resource Management
S/GBV	Sexual or Gender-Based Violence
SDG	Sudanese Pounds
SHG	Self Help Groups (group involved with savings and credit)
UNAMID	United Nations – African Union Assistance Mission in Darfur
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSLA	Village or Group Savings and Loan Associations
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation

USEFUL NOTES

Currency equivalents (July 2018, local market rate)¹

Currency Unit	–	Sudanese Pound
USD \$1.00	=	42.5

Glossary of local terms

Makhamas – relates to 1.25 fedans / 0.525 hectares

Fedan – 0.42 hectares

Hakama (hakamat)– Local woman (women) poet / charismatic ‘strong’ woman (women)

¹ <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article65853> Subsequently the currency has been further devalued.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A complex country with a turbulent history, Sudan has suffered protracted social conflict and civil war in the past 20 years, particularly in the southern and western regions, and struggles with a decline in oil revenues following the formal secession of South Sudan in 2011. Most of the rural population now lives off farming, physically and economically.

2. Gender and women's rights are considered extremely sensitive topics in Sudan. This report takes a special focus on examining the changing reality of life for agro-pastoralist women and girls in the context of conflict and displacement in South Darfur, through the lens of social norms and barriers, adding to a set of regional studies (Ritchie, 2015-2017). Increasingly fragile, agro-pastoralist groups in East Africa now often combine pastoralism with both farming and trading. Women in such societies have been identified as both marginalized and vulnerable. In the Darfur region of Sudan, rural women remain particularly challenged, with insecurity, conflict and displacement. Yet with appropriate development interventions, improved access to services and supportive government policies, women and girls stand at the forefront of social change, as they adopt new livelihood opportunities and embrace new rights and entitlements – although with uncertain implications for agro-pastoralist life.

3. The research aimed to capture both qualitative as well as quantitative dynamics of current change in agro-pastoralist girls' and women's social norms, customs and practices in South Darfur in Sudan, adding insights to regional studies in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland, and South Sudan (Ritchie, 2015-2017). In adopting an innovative 'institutional analysis' approach, the research highlights the scope of evolving norms, persisting social barriers, and emerging new opportunities for agro-pastoralist women and girls. It also provides a deeper appreciation of the influence of local actors in processes of change (and local attitudes) against the backdrop of broader social, political and environmental trends. The research sought to generate a 'rapid social snapshot' that remained imprecise numerically, but focused on illuminating trends of change in attitudes and practices at the village level and beyond, and perspectives across different groups.

4. The scope of the Sudan/South Darfur study covers selected (agro)pastoral communities from Care International Switzerland's (CIS) operational areas in Belil and Kass localities (mixed Fur and Arab areas²). Using qualitative research tools, the practical research gathered specific information at national, district and village level, with selected quantitative indicators collected (at a local level) to gauge 'change and range' in norms (with change assessed over the past 10-15 years). In total, the research drew on over 200 respondents, including adolescent girls, women and men (local leaders and community members), government representatives and NGO staff. Limitations included the thematic scope of the study (only selected norms were researched); the geographical area; and the locally specific and chaotic nature of local norms. Yet, whilst change over time is indeed difficult to assess (depending on the indicator), the research aimed to rather open up and explore changing dynamics (and the direction of change) in different domains of women and girls' lives (positive or negative), and some of the factors driving change.

5. Chapter II briefly elaborates on trends in pastoralism in East Africa, the local context of Sudan and South Darfur, and agro-pastoralist society and culture. This chapter emphasizes the environmental and social fragility of agro-pastoralism in East Africa, with women and girls facing notable vulnerability. South Darfur poses significant

² In previous research in the region, a specific ethnic group was identified to study change within a sub culture at a local level. However, in the context of South Darfur, community settlements (in particular IDP areas) tend to be more mixed than in other regions in this research, in part due to war and displacement. In this case, research in South Darfur incorporated Fur as well as Arab communities/groups into the discussions.

challenges for rural agro-pastoralist communities, with insecurity (and tribal tensions), poor coverage and quality of basic services, and rising populations.

6. In Chapter III, the practical research findings are presented, and the scope of rural women and girls' traditional norms and barriers in target areas in South Darfur, including harmful and traditional practices (e.g. FGM/C, early marriage, gender based violence), the weight of domestic chores, women's decision-making and access to resources, and participation in basic education, and brief insights into maternal health.

7. Chapter IV looks closer at the influence of local trends/actors. Schools have been a key actor in facilitating change in attitudes and behaviours related to girls (directly). Driving physical, social and economic change, NGOs such as CIS have supported women's empowerment through WATSAN interventions, improving local governance, and in the establishment of the VSLAs. The process of change appears to be particularly influenced by the cultural roots of norms, family/community attitudes, legislation and access to services, and local insecurity. Environmental factors, and insecurity are adding further pressures on potential change.

8. Chapter V provides a synthesis of change in different norms, and drivers (or barriers) of change building on Chapter III and IV. The following summarizes some of the key findings and trends related to selected social norms and barriers for women and girls in these target areas, and indicative 'change and range' from the past 10-15 years:

I. Harmful/traditional practices

1.1 Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation (FGC/M)

In the past 15 years, there has been a change in the type of FGM/C conducted, with a shift towards Type I *Sunna* version, and slight decrease in the (average) age (younger girls of 7-10 years old). For new cases of FGM/C, there has been a slight reduction in the prevalence and it now remains hidden (although it remains high in villages in Belil). The UNICEF-led '**Saleema**' campaign against FGM/C has been effective in promoting new dialogue, but rather than local abandonment, it appears to have pushed practices towards the *Sunna* (Islamic) version. FGM/C has deep roots in local culture and identity, and is now also tied to possible religious links, complicating change. Trained community **midwives** advocate against FGM, but advice or guidance on FGM remains lacking at school. The potential efforts of **local government, NGOs**, and media have also been held back with stalled efforts at national criminal legislation. **Religious leaders** have supported the Saleema campaign, but remain less active in general social dialogue. **Rural women** (and Traditional Cutters) are key resisters to change with fears around girls' virginity, and marriage prospects. More remote/under-served, less educated and Arab nomadic communities demonstrate more traditional attitudes, and slower indications of change.

1.2 Early and arranged marriage

There are now very few cases of 'early' marriage (below 14 years old). Yet 'underage' adolescent-led marriage has become the new norm and trend for village girls, in contrast to a broader spectrum of marriage ages in the past. The average marriage age of rural girls currently stands at 15-19 years in the target villages, and 16-18 years in the IDP areas. 'Arranged marriage' has also decreased to less than a half of new marriages, with couples preferring modern 'choice' marriages. Such marriage practices allow girls to choose their own marriage time and partner. Shifts away from early and arranged marriage have been driven by a combination of **exposure as IDPs, girls' education** (rights and choice), and **NGO awareness**. Less positively, **fathers** may still pursue arranged marriages however, particularly with family poverty (and dowries), but also once girls drop out of school, as a form of protection and to keep the family honour. Trends in adolescent marriage appear to be driven by **school drop out**, and **peer family/pressure**, exacerbated by the increased **interaction between the sexes, poor access to secondary schools** and **poverty**. Social dialogue by NGOs and local government is held back by a lack of legislation, and lack of school level discussion.

1.3 Gender violence

Whilst decreasing in acceptability, wife battery continues at a household level, often exacerbated by times of **crises**, and with men's **alcohol consumption** (common in the **rainy season**). During times of stress, women often bear the brunt of men's frustration in being unable to fulfill their traditional roles in protecting their family, or providing for them. Rape and sexual violence exists but are mostly indicated to be problematic during **conflict** periods (reduced now that villages are more peaceful again). Violence and theft may also be common however in more isolated situations, especially in less secure areas (Kass). In IDP areas (in particular), NGO awareness raising, education and an emerging knowledge of the law are reducing social acceptability and prevalence of domestic violence. New '**Women Centres**' (Global Aid Hand) at the village level may provide local support in pursuing appropriate support and justice.

II. Women and girls' domestic chores

At the village level, the general scope of women's domestic chores remains unchanged, but there is a mixed picture in terms of the weight of work (with improved access to water), and some participation of men. There is also an increased use of **carts and donkeys**. Access to firewood was deteriorating, with **deforestation**, increasing populations, men's collection for the market, and **seasonal risk and insecurity** during the farming months. In IDP areas, access to water is usually good (although water points were malfunctioning during the research). Access to fuel in the camps was boosted by the use of charcoal (although purchased), and **use of improved stoves** (at present less durable mud version). **NGOs** have been instrumental in the improvement of water points, and providing training on improved stoves (IDP areas). Yet in villages, **a lack of knowledge/access to improved stoves (and alternative options) is hindering their use and adoption.**

III. Women's control/access to assets and productive resources

There is little shift in traditional control and access to resources (land, livestock and cash), except in female-headed households (FHHs). Wife inheritance (widows that are obliged to remarry her husband's brother/clansmen) has dropped in past several years. For widows over 40-45 years of age, less than 10% may be expected to remarry (only with her consent), although it may still be high for those less than 40 years of age - although in IDPs areas in particular, there is increasing resistance to such remarriage. **Education, and exposure to new ideas** may be slowly driving shifts in attitudes regarding women's choices and entitlements. Yet in the event of death or divorce, legislation and legal rights remain less known outside of the urban areas, with people preferring locally led Islamic resolution (settled at the community level). Little awareness raising has been done in this domain of women's lives, and there is limited social dialogue. **VSLAs** however may be shifting balances of power and access to resources, opening up new opportunities and livelihoods.

IV. Gender relations and Decision-making

Gender relations may be slowly improving with more respect, status and value bestowed upon girls and women. Women are increasingly involved in community decision-making (except traditional meetings) with NGO encouragement, IDP exposure and education, shifting local attitudes related to women in decision-making (although practical change is slow). At a household-level, women's 'consultation' in major household decision-making (including expenditure, marriage of children etc.) is high (unchanged) but women's influence is still low, although to be growing (in the younger, educated generation). Women's community participation appears to be driven initially by **NGO** pressure, but it is also encouraged by **VSLA** participation (villages). Notably this does apply to traditional meetings however. Active women's participation (i.e. speaking up) is influenced by women's wealth and status. Less positively, women's empowerment and participation in community structures and committees may also be undermined by **conservative elders** and **culture of male dominance**, as 'resistors to change' (often driven by a lack of education, and/or fear of change).

V. Participation in basic services: Education and Maternal health

Girls' participation in education services has increased remarkably in recent years, with over two thirds of girls in primary school; and over a fifth attending secondary school (and up half in some IDP areas). There is also increasing demand for Non-Formal Education by women. Participation in primary education has been driven by **government/UNICEF campaigns**, and some **NGO support to schools**. **Families** may also promote girls in school, particularly those who are educated (or who participate in VSLAs), or were IDPs. Yet less positively, dropout is high at secondary school, affected by *physical access (to single sex schools)*, *family preference to send boys and household poverty* (with subsequent *early marriage /pregnancy*). Resources in schools also remain low (with a lack of trained/female teachers and facilities). Whilst **religious leaders** support *khalwas* (Islamic schools), there is a lack of (religious) support for mainstream education.

In terms of maternal health services, at the village level, women and girls' use of **local health posts** is still low (with still limited facilities), but attitudes and practices are changing in recent years: over 60% may have a trained midwife in attendance at birth; and over 10-20% of women give birth in clinics. **Midwives** play a key role at the village level in maternal advice and support. With **good access to services** and **NGO training** in IDP areas, over half of mothers give birth in clinics, and there is high engagement in pre-natal/post natal tests. Knowledge and use of formal planning methods remain limited in the villages, but up to 30% of rural women may use contraceptives in the IDP areas.

9. The final Chapter VI outlines key insights into fostering agro-pastoralist women and girls' norm change, and identifies practical recommendations and action points for NGOs and local governments. Positively, some of women and girls' traditional norms have been shown to be slowly changing through exposure to new ideas as IDPs, and education. However, changes to more deeply rooted norms are proving difficult, and may require more strategic local support (from charismatic men and women), and stronger methods of 'cultural integration'. Moving beyond the paradigm of emergency and relief, the following recommendations build on community recommendations (from this study), as well as broader CARE studies on agro-pastoralist women and girls in East Africa. The various action points emphasize both drawing on both local and external change agents and stakeholders in supporting women and girls' development and empowerment, including leveraging Darfur **diaspora**:

I **Access to basic services**: The report recommends continued advocacy for girls' participation in (quality) primary education, and exploring new ways to promote secondary school attendance for both girls (and boys) through local mobilization, clubs and community/school campaigns for rural girls, as well as leveraging Darfur diaspora financial support (school books and sanitary pads) and sourcing donor family incentives (e.g. food items) for very poor families (e.g. UNICEF).

II **Local dialogue and advocacy**: The report recommends better harnessing charismatic women and role models for local social dialogue and action, as well as drawing on *progressive leaders and religious representatives* for community-level awareness raising. Complementing this, the report advises supporting *cross-community* exposure visits and creating stronger ties between rural and urban areas.

III **Social organization, and collective action**: The report suggests strengthening women's networks/groups (e.g. VSLAs, health committees) with higher-level collective action at a *cross-village level*, as well as establishing adolescent networks/groups (Adolescent-VSLAs). In agro-pastoralist areas, agencies should consider the development of women's cooperatives with agricultural skills development.

IV **Local resources, environment and technology**: In addition to water storage tanks and rainwater harvesting, the report suggests introducing new local **appropriate technologies** (with market mechanisms) to support women's domestic burdens, including exploring *improved stoves* (e.g. those by the NGO ENDEV in Kenya). At a local level, support

inter-community strategy making in environmental management to support access to firewood and security.

V ***Communications, and media***: The report suggests facilitating **access to radio stations and radio programmes** particularly through mobile phones, to boost non-formal education and social messaging.

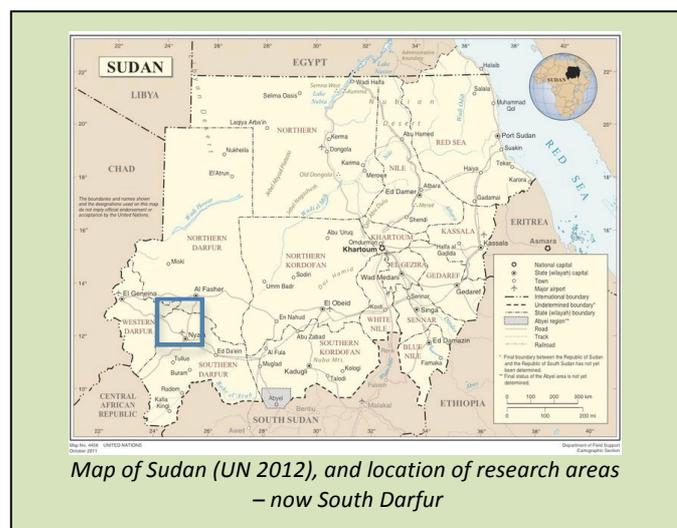
I INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF REPORT

This report takes a special focus on examining the changing reality of life for agro-pastoralist women and girls in **South Darfur, Sudan** through the lens of social norms and barriers, adding to a set of regional studies (Ritchie 2015-2017). Increasingly fragile, agro-pastoralist groups in East Africa now often combine pastoralism with both farming and trading. **Women in such societies have been identified as both marginalized and vulnerable** (Flintan, 2007, 2008; CARE, 2009; Ritchie, 2015-2017). In the Darfur region of Sudan, rural women remain particularly challenged, with insecurity, conflict and displacement. Yet with appropriate development interventions, access to services and government policies, women and girls stand at the forefront of social change, as they adopt new livelihood opportunities and embrace new rights and entitlements – but with uncertain implications for agro-pastoralist life. In this introductory chapter, a brief overview of Sudan and gender dynamics is presented. The focus and objective of this report is then elaborated, and details of the research methods employed for the study.

1.1 SUDAN, DARFUR AND GENDER

Situated in the Northeast of Africa, Sudan is the third largest country on the continent, with seven international borders: Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad and Libya. A complex country with a turbulent recent history, Sudan has suffered protracted social conflict and civil war, and struggles with a decline in oil revenues following the secession of the South in 2011 (with 80% of Sudan's oil fields in South Sudan, and challenges on the implementation of transit fees), although they are endowed with rich natural resources, including natural gas and gold.³ By the end of 2015, Sudan had external debt valued at \$50 billion. At the time of the research, the country faced a national fuel crisis and growing inflation. Sudan also grappled with high levels of corruption. The 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index provided by Transparency International, ranked Sudan 175 out of 180 countries. Until October 2017, Sudan was subject to comprehensive US sanctions on financial and trade transactions (now partially lifted).

To diversify and strengthen the economy, Sudan is now aiming to further develop non-oil sources of revenues, with a focus on gold mining and agriculture. At present, Sudan is the world's largest exporter of Arabic gum, producing 75-80% of the world's total output. Agriculture and livestock remain the key livelihood sectors for 80% of people, and contribute approximately 35-40% of GDP⁴. This sector has the potential to further expand and grow as indicated in country strategy papers (e.g. Five Year Program for Economic Reforms, approved 2014). In terms of political and democratic indicators, in 2010, the World Bank Institute ranked Sudan in the lowest 5th percentile of all countries in terms of



³ <http://www.sd.undp.org/content/sudan/en/home/countryinfo/>

⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/sudan/overview>

voice and accountability systems, defined as ‘perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media’ (CIS 2013).

Sudan is officially made up of 18 states (see map inset with South Darfur research area highlighted). Major ethnic groups include Sudanese Arab, Fur, Beja, and Nuba. Sudan has an estimated population of 37 million people, with medium-high fertility rates (3.57 children per woman) (CIA, 2018)⁵. Over 59% of Sudan’s population is younger than 25 years of age (ibid.). An estimated 24% of Sudanese are illiterate, with up to 32% illiteracy amongst women (ibid.). In 2017, approximately 4.8 million people were described to be in need of humanitarian assistance, a reduction of 1 million compared to 2016 (after severe failures in crops in 2015) (OCHA, 2017). With uneven development, ongoing conflict in Darfur, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile states, a lack of basic infrastructure, and subsistence agriculture, Sudan struggles with a poverty rate of 46.5%, and major disparities between urban and rural areas (CIA, 2018).⁶ The urban informal sector accounts for more than 60% of Sudan’s GDP (ibid.). Such economic activity has contributed to the rural-urban migration, and has led to a ‘weakening’ of the agricultural sector. Sudan still demonstrates low human development indicators yet there are significant regional disparities. The Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (2014) highlights high levels of infant mortality (68 per 1000 live births), and child malnutrition (one-third of under-five children are underweight) (CBS & UNICEF, 2016). Maternal mortality is estimated at 311 per 100,000 live births.⁷

1.1.1 Region of Darfur

In Sudan, most of the rural population lives off farming, physically and economically. With major conflict, disruption and displacement in contexts such as Darfur (in particular in 2003-4, and 2007-2008), cattle assets have been decimated, although they still play a minor socio-cultural value, shaping local traditions, and life ceremonies, particularly in nomadic Arab communities. UN OCHA emphasizes two major humanitarian challenges in Sudan: the first related to conflict with wide-scale population displacement, and the second related to climatic and socio-cultural conditions exacerbating crisis levels of food insecurity and malnutrition (OCHA, 2017). The protracted nature of displacement in Darfur is particularly highlighted. An estimated 1.6 million displaced people are registered as living in camps in Darfur, with a further 0.5 million unregistered, residing in host communities and settlements. With a high dependency on aid and donor fatigue, there is now a gradual push away from emergency programming towards ‘development’ thinking and ‘resilience’ projects. In April 2013, the Darfur Development Strategy (DDS) was endorsed. Whilst peace has generally returned in Darfur, renewed conflict and hostilities broke out in Jebel Marra on the west side of South Darfur in 2016 (between SLA/AW and SAF), displacing further families and communities (OCHA, 2017).

From a humanitarian perspective, displacement affects access to basic services, and hinders livelihood activities, impacting food security and community resilience. With increasing pressures on resources, in many parts of Darfur, local tribal conflict has generated further insecurity and displacement, often between sedentary-farming and nomadic-pastoral communities. Women and children remain particularly vulnerable with heightened risk of gender-based violence during movements to markets, for water and wood collection and farming. Many displaced choose to remain in camps or in settlements and urban areas, ‘seeking opportunities for a safer future’, with some commuting seasonally to check on the land and farm (OCHA, 2017).

⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html>

⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html>

⁷ http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/sdn.pdf?ua=1 Accessed 22 Sept 2018.

1.1.2 Sudanese women's rights and norms

Gender and women's rights are considered extremely sensitive topics in the context of Sudan, with the strong perceived links of such topics to Islam and the local culture. Perhaps more so than in other countries in the Horn of Africa, it is critical to appreciate and reflect on Sudan's recent history to understand the uncertain pathway towards women's rights, and the related pressures of political Islam and war. With an educated elite, the movement towards women's legal rights in Sudan was in fact precipitated early within the region, with the establishment of the Sudanese Women's Union in 1952. Over the subsequent 'modernisation period' (1956 -1983), the women's movement accelerated social and political mobilisation for women's rights. During this time, the formalisation of many women's rights was instituted, including laws on consensual marriage, divorce, child custody and allowance rights; and girls' school enrolment was notably increased. Yet progress was halted and suppressed with the shift to political Islam and the adoption of Sharia Law over 1983-2005. A brief democratic government came into power from 1986 to 1989, but women's political participation remained limited. In 1989, a conservative regime followed with a strict interpretation of Sharia's law, in particular influencing the family law and penal code, with restrictions on women's public mobility and work participation (CIS, 2013)⁸. The next period of history saw 'unprecedented record of discrimination and abuse against women' with Darfur in 2004 described by the UN as 'the world's worst humanitarian crisis', particularly with gender related atrocities. Finally, in contrast to previous constitutions, a new Interim National Constitution was instituted in 2005 with a strong statement on gender equality and its promotion through affirmative action.

As indicated by CIS (2013), the major force engaged in the promotion of gender equality in Sudan is the country's socio-political women's movement. In the negotiation of women's rights with the Islamic state, the movement presents parallel but contrasting positions: with some female activists focusing on the 'emancipated' Muslim women, and the alignment of Sharia law with international women's human rights (Islamic feminism); whilst others campaign for the 'protected' Muslim woman, in a 'conservative, gender-segregated doctrine which refutes all non-Islamic laws (Salafism)' (ibid.). Meanwhile, there are also notable academic institutions that seek to bolster women's development, status and contribution in society (for example, Ahfad University for Women).⁹ Recent pro-women and girls legal reforms include the Civil Service Act (2007) (related to access to jobs and work and equal pay), the revised Nationality Act (2005) (grants women the right to pass nationality to their children), the Armed Forces Act (2007) (special protection of women during armed conflict), and the 2009 amendment of the Criminal Code (1991) (covers war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity). Yet the enforceability of rights claims under these laws remains limited. In 2008 however, further positive steps were taken with the Sudanese National Elections Act (2008) amended to provide women with a fixed quota of 25% of seats. Recently, other legal mechanisms to promote women's empowerment (across the Ministries of Justice, Welfare, Education and Health; and Central Bank of Sudan) have included the following:

- National Plan for Combating Gender-based Violence (2005)
- Sudan National Action Plan for the Implementation of 1325 (Women, Peace & Security) (2017)
- Establishment of a Family & Child Protection Unit (2006)

⁸ Tønnessen, L. (2007), 'Gendered Citizenship in Sudan: Competing Perceptions of Women's Civil Rights within the Family Laws among Northern and Southern Elites in Khartoum', *CMI Working Paper 2007-4*, cited in CIS (2013).

⁹ Ahfad University for Women (AUW) was established in 1966 with the aim to train and equip women to become active change agents in the development of Sudan.

- National Women’s Empowerment Policy (2007)¹⁰
- National Girls’ Education Policy (2007)
- Pro-women Microfinance Policy¹¹ (2008)
- National Strategy for Eradication of FGM/C (2008)
- National Health Policy (2007/11)- and *Reproductive Health Strategy*

Yet, it is argued that **progress towards change in women and girls rights is slow**, with continued restrictions on space for women’s citizen participation, and limited resource allocation for women to realize civil society initiatives (CIS, 2013). In particular, the poor progress in social and economic rights for women remains problematic. A number of infringements on women’s rights remain in the Personal Status Law, Public Order Act and Penal Code, along with several other laws. As yet, Sudan has not ratified the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in addition to the Africa Protocol on Women’s Rights ‘due to the potential clash with Sharia law’¹² and reservation/disagreement by some religious groups. Sudan has also yet to adopt gender-sensitive budgeting processes (CIS, 2013). As summarized by SIDA, in Sudan, women’s rights are both ‘politicised and sensitive’, and the struggle for gender justice by Sudanese women is ‘fragmented and divided by region, ethnicity, religion and class’ (SIDA, 2011). In fostering change, appropriate gender interventions are also lacking in programming, due to the lack of gender analysis and understanding of gendered needs (Elkarib, 2016).

In the rural areas in Sudan, as common across East Africa, **local traditions and customs, and gender perceptions and assumptions shape gender norms**, and contribute to ‘inequitable gender relations, violence against women and discrimination against women’ (CIS, 2013), influencing rural women and girls’ abilities to move beyond poverty in their families and communities. In general, social and cultural norms in most regions in Sudan restrict women’s movement outside her home, with permission to leave the house needed from the male head of household (father, husband, brother, etc.).

Gender and conflict

In conflict affected parts of Sudan such as Darfur, traditional gender norms and relations have been both magnified and strained, with women and girls left especially vulnerable, particularly related to food security, violence and protection. Approximately two thirds of the local population lives in rural areas¹³, with livelihoods centred on livestock (cattle, sheep and goats) and agriculture. During times of conflict, rural women and girls suffer disproportionately in large part due to the increased burden of work in the absence of men and boys. Yet, women often develop ‘new coping skills and confidence, requiring courage and resilience to help sustain and rebuild families and communities torn apart by war’¹⁴. In such situations, women are vulnerable to violence, particularly sexual violence. The latter became a global concern during the Darfur conflict, with increased incidences of sexual violations, for example in women’s collection of firewood and water.¹⁵ In addition, in conflict situations, women face constraints accessing economic opportunities. In Darfur, livelihoods have been affected by the ‘systematic asset-stripping, production failures, market failures, failures of access to natural resources and constraints on the remittances of migrant workers’¹⁶ Further to this, the disruption of the

¹⁰ A new 2016 policy is forthcoming (Interview with Ministry of Social Affairs, Khartoum, 10 May 2018).

¹¹ This allocates 30% of available funds for women.

¹² Interview with UN Women, Khartoum, 7 May 2018.

¹³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html>

¹⁴ C Lindsey (date unknown). *Women facing war: ICRC study on the impact of armed conflict on women*, cited in CIS (2013).

¹⁵ Women for Women International (2006) *Beyond Darfur: War’s Impact on Sudanese Women and Their Hopes for a Peaceful Future*, cited in CIS (2013).

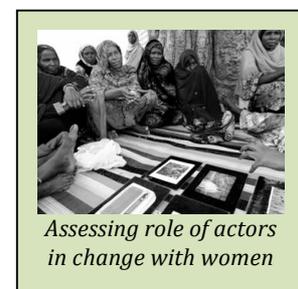
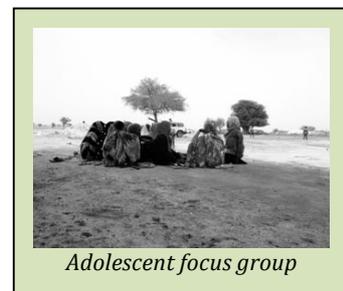
¹⁶ Young et al (2005). *Darfur Livelihoods under Siege: Final Report*, Tufts University & Ahfad University for

traditional family structure in conflict and changing roles of women can have negative effects on men with increased alcoholism and higher levels of domestic violence towards women.¹⁷

1.2 FOCUS AND OBJECTIVE OF REPORT

Contributing to the growing literature, this report aimed to capture both qualitative as well as quantitative dynamics of current change in **agro-pastoralist girls' and women's social norms, customs and practices in South Darfur (Belil and Kass)** regions in Sudan, adding insights to research in Ethiopia (Ritchie, 2015), Kenya (Ritchie, 2016), Somaliland (Ritchie, 2017a) and South Sudan (Ritchie, 2017b). In adopting an innovative 'institutional analysis' approach¹⁸, the research highlights the scope of evolving norms, persisting social barriers, and emerging new opportunities for pastoralist women and girls. It also provides a deeper appreciation of the influence of local actors in processes of change (and local attitudes and perceptions) against the backdrop of broader social, political and environmental trends.

The overall objective of the research was to contribute to CARE International's pastoral programme in East Africa, and the development of a causal model of (agro)pastoral resilience. Building on recent research in East Africa (Ritchie, 2015-2017), the scope of the Sudan study covers selected (agro)pastoral communities from Care International Switzerland's (CIS) operational areas in South Darfur¹⁹ (these were predominantly Fur areas²⁰). In 2012, CIS conducted a comprehensive overarching analysis of gender in Sudan²¹, with a brief inclusion of some field findings in South Darfur (CIS, 2013). Adding value to this, the research for this current study focuses **more deeply on appreciating trends in rural women and girls' (selected) social norms and barriers to generate a broad picture of the status quo at the local level in South Darfur**. Using the original framework developed in Ethiopia, the research aimed to look at the local Sudan/Darfur reality of agro-pastoralists to further contribute to understanding the changing nature of rural communities and gender dynamics, and enable the development of appropriate strategies that can best assist vulnerable groups such as agro-pastoralist women and girls. In particular, the phenomenon of **climate change** is 'challenging norms and shifting the traditional barriers to change in gender relations' presenting new opportunities for 'linking adaptation with improved gender equality' (Joto Africa, 2014).



Women, cited in CIS 2013.

¹⁷ ACORD (2002). J El-Bushra, A El-Karib, A Hadjipateras, *Gender-sensitive programme design and planning in conflict-affected situations*, cited in CIS (2013).

¹⁸ This is drawn from the social sciences on institutional change (particularly related to informal institutions such as norms), and incorporates the interaction of structure and agency.

¹⁹ The original plan in the TOR was to incorporate East Darfur and a second major ethnic group, but sadly field delays prevented a full study of that region. This report thus focuses on the fieldwork and interviews in South Darfur only.

²⁰ In previous research in the region, a specific ethnic group was identified to study change within a sub culture at a local level. However, in the context of South Darfur, community settlements (in particular IDP areas) tend to be more mixed than in other regions in this research, in part due to war and displacement. As such, research in South Darfur included Fur as well as Arab communities into the discussions.

²¹ At a country level, this included a discussion of law, governance, voice and accountability; demographics and population; economy; poverty, livelihoods and food security; education; reproductive health; water, sanitation and environmental health; and climate change.

In strengthening CARE's understanding of the status of (agro)pastoralist women and girls, the study specifically integrated people's current experiences, taking into account changing realities including diverse factors such as climate change as well as regional restrictions to pastoral movement, sedentarisation/urbanization (leading to the 'transitioning out of pastoralism' groups), the emerging disparity between rich and poor, and government policies. In view of CARE's programming, the study took a special focus on **adolescent girls**; an impact group that CARE is keen to better understand, particularly in times of change for women and girls. Findings from the research are envisaged to have cross-sectoral recommendations for future CARE programming in the Horn of Africa, and thus the study aimed to be sensitive to the full context of evolving pastoralist and agro-pastoralist realities, situating social norms and barriers to women and girls' empowerment in the wider development context.

Following an initial desk review of relevant programme/project documents from CIS in Sudan, and relevant secondary materials including policy documents, project reports and research studies, the main focus of the study was then centred on the practical research findings in the context of South Darfur (Kass and Belil localities) at community, locality and state level, exploring the lives of rural women and girls, and **selected norms and barriers**²². This report thus draws together recent studies on pastoralism and rural women's empowerment in East Africa, with new additional field insights generated from this study to provide critical indications of key social barriers and emerging opportunities for women and girls in the South Darfur region of Sudan. The study further endeavoured to analyze **existing trends and dynamics**, and crucially elaborate on **key actors facilitating/inhibiting change processes**. The research aims to fit into a broader body of work already underway in the Horn of Africa to better understand women and change in agro-pastoralist areas (Ritchie, 2015-2017). *The TOR is given in Appendix 1.*

1.3 RESEARCH METHODS AND GEORGRAPHICAL FOCUS

As a core background to this study, this research initially interrogated existing literature on women and agro-pastoralism in the Horn of Africa, including country-level/regional research and reports (e.g. academic and country-level studies) and held a series of key informant interviews in Khartoum (1 week). In the short 10 day (Darfur) field research (July 2018), the study then investigated selected communities/IDP camps in two localities in South Darfur (Belil and Kass), and relevant groups in Nyala. This aimed to particularly build on CARE's recent research on gender and pastoralists/agro-pastoralists in the Horn of Africa.²³ Research communities/sites (6) were purposively identified within CARE's operational remit in the two localities. These were predominantly comprised of the Fur tribe, and indicated variations in access to resources and services, and NGO assistance. The research sought to explore the specific status of selected pastoralist/agro-pastoralist women and girls' norms (and insights into change over the past 10-15 years), and persisting barriers, drawing on different perspectives.

As with the previous studies in the region, the short research aimed to generate a **'rapid social snapshot'** at the community level that remained imprecise in terms of numbers, but focused instead on illuminating **trends of change in attitudes, perspectives and practices from within and outside the community, and related drivers of change, generating a broad picture of the changing**



²² These social norms and barriers were identified in earlier research in Ethiopia (CARE 2009, 2015).

²³ This includes Ritchie (2015-2017) and CARE Ethiopia (2009).

nature of rural women and girls lives in the target areas (and identifying specific areas for further research and interrogation).²⁴ Towards unraveling change mechanisms, it sought to investigate major local actors/organizations influencing change (from within and outside of the community) and key approaches used (e.g., training, campaigns), and to appreciate broader regional pressures/interventions (in and beyond communities). Finally, the study looked at the impact of change on pastoralist/agro-pastoralist women and girls' lives (and gender relations), and areas of potential opportunity for their continued empowerment.

The research adopted a **three-pronged approach** to the fieldwork including targeting the 'cluster' village level²⁵, and NGO and institutional levels. Using qualitative research tools, the practical research gathered specific information at both village and locality level, with selected quantitative indicators collected to gauge 'change and range'. Estimates of change are based on research discussions both within and beyond the community (such as relevant technical workers, for example health and education officials, and civil society representatives). Tools included key informant interviews, focus group discussions (with innovative ethnographic exercises and cards), semi-structure interviews and observation (*Note: specific research tools appear in Appendix 2*).

In total, the research drew on approximately 200 respondents, including adolescent girls, women and men (local leaders and community members), government representatives and NGO staff. A total of 18 community-level focus groups/PRA discussions were held with 8-12 participants per group. This included 6 focus groups with adolescent girls (aged 15-20 years), 6 focus groups with women (local community members and representatives) and 6 focus group discussions with men (local leaders and community members), in addition to 10 case study interviews (with adolescents and men). Beyond the community, in addition to, the consultant conducted technical interviews with CARE staff; and key informant interviews with NGOs and civil society in South Darfur (15), and local government departments (3). Further, a total of 15 key informant interviews were conducted with NGOs and civil society in Khartoum, and 3 key informant interviews were held with government departments. (*See Appendix 3 for details on the main groups met*). At the end of the research, preliminary findings were then presented in Khartoum with CIS partners and donors, with feedback and comments integrated into the analysis.

Limitations included the thematic scope of the study. Using an initial framework developed in Ethiopia, selected social norms were pre-identified and examined with view to understanding socio-cultural barriers and change for (agro)pastoralist women and girls, in vein with earlier CARE studies (Ritchie, 2015-2017). In generating a broad picture of women and girls' changing lives in target areas in South Darfur, specific norms of attention included **harmful and traditional practices** (e.g. FGM, early marriage, gender based violence), the **weight of domestic chores, women's decision-making and access to resources**, and **participation in basic education**, and brief insights into **maternal health**. Secondly, limitations also included the geographical scope of the fieldwork. The research drew on two rural localities: Belil and Kass. The main focus group research did not include urban community sites, although town trends and dynamics were touched upon with staff and key informants (in particular Nyala and Kass town). Thirdly, in terms of the research process at the community level, the focus group (FG) meetings varied across the groups, and across rural and urban realities, with particular challenges faced by local male researchers in discussing and exploring social norms. Finally, in terms of the investigation of the character of the norms themselves, it is critical to highlight the locally specific, and chaotic nature of local norms, and the challenge in firmly defining their scope

²⁴ Notably, changes in attitudes and perspectives are often precursors for practical change in norms and habits (Ritchie 2016).

²⁵ As in other regions, the 'cluster village' level was targeted to draw on a broad village catchment area.

and boundaries. As with the research in neighbouring countries, change over time in norms was measured using a key landmark date approximately 5-10 years prior to the research. In the Darfur region of Sudan, the ‘**time of displacement**’ or **10-15 years ago** was deemed to be the most suitable choice (i.e. 2003) to discuss the change in practices over a tangible period, particularly with major disruption and change since this time. **Yet, whilst change over time is indeed to difficult to assess (depending on the indicator), the research aimed to essentially open up and explore changing dynamics (and the direction of change) in different domains of women and girls’ lives (positive or negative), and some of the reasons behind such trends of change.**

(See Appendix 4 for a full discussion of the research limitations).

1.4 STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The report is structured as follows: **Chapter II** briefly describes the country/regional context: Sudan and trends in agro-pastoralism, the physical and social situation of South Darfur, and agro-pastoralist society and gender dynamics. **Chapter III** turns to the practical research findings: the local situation in research villages in South Darfur, and the scope of rural women and girls’ social norms and barriers. Taking this further, **Chapter IV** assesses trends and highlights key actors influencing processes of change, at both an overarching level, and in the research target areas (change agents and change inhibitors). **Chapter V** synthesizes the scope of agro-pastoralist women and girls’ (evolving) norms and persisting barriers in reviewing progress towards change, and in measuring the scope of agro-pastoralist women and girls’ (evolving) empowerment. Building off Chapter V, the final **Chapter VI** outlines key insights into fostering agro-pastoralist women and girls’ norm change (actors in change, prevailing counter forces), and identifies practical recommendations and action points for both policy/institutional level, as well as grassroots NGO strategies and interventions, particularly CARE’s Theory of Change.

II AGRO-PASTORALISM AND GENDER IN EAST AFRICA AND SUDAN

This second chapter briefly elaborates further on trends in agro-pastoralism in East Africa and Sudan, and agro-pastoralist society and culture. The discussion draws particular attention to *gender dynamics*, and women and girls' marginalization in such contexts, and the role of social norms and customs. Turning to the research context of South Darfur (Kass and Belil localities), the discussion outlines key characteristics of these target regions in terms of local ethnic groups, geography, livelihoods and aid support. It also highlights climatic, institutional and social dynamics influencing rural women and girls' lives and degrees of vulnerability.

2.1 AGRO-PASTORALISM IN EAST AFRICA, AND DARFUR, SUDAN

In the past 40 years, the fragile balance of pastoralism and agro-pastoralism in East Africa has been disrupted by a combination of the pressures of drought and rangeland reduction, in addition to the weakening of customary structures/institutions of natural resource management (NRM). In countries such as Ethiopia, agro-pastoralism has been affected by the intervention of outsiders including government, the arrival of newcomers, and the (related) loss of respect for tradition (Flintan, 2007). The increase in migration of men for work has further affected the societal rhythm. Land rights are being secured by support for land certification processes although these have tended to focus on the highland areas (Ibid). Problematically, these can often be organized through the household head (men) with little participation of women (or acknowledgment of marginalized groups such as widows). As many pastoralist communities in East Africa move into *agro-pastoralism*, the process of sedentarisation may bring positive as well as negative impacts (Ibid). On the one hand, women may be expected to manage the crops in the men's absence (whilst herding), boosting women's empowerment. Yet studies also indicate a linkage between sedentarisation and rangeland degradation (e.g. IFAD, 1994 in Flintan, 2007), leading to reduced numbers of livestock, and related livestock products, and increased poverty (with particular pressures on women). In the context of Darfur, Sudan, agro-pastoralist groups practice a **range of livelihoods** (including farming, and non-farm livelihoods). Cattle may now play a lesser role for ethnic groups such as the Fur, but remain dominant (economically/socially) for other ethnic groups (e.g. Arab/ nomadic communities).

Agro-pastoralist groups in Darfur: shift towards farming and non-farm livelihoods with depletion of livestock assets

Managing sustainable and evolving livelihoods is critical for 'pastoralist' as well as 'agro-pastoralist' communities both in economic terms, as well as from a socio-cultural standpoint. Towards appreciating the value of culture and traditions for agro-pastoralists, the concept of 'poverty' may be described to equate to a lack of livestock (and livestock resources) and a deprivation of basic needs (food, shelter, clothing), as well as importantly, a lack of ability to maintain 'ancestral cultural heritage/norms' (PFE, 2006). Such cultural perspectives are critical to understanding agro-pastoralist communities in a time of change, and finding ways to build meaningfully on their socio-cultural heritage and traditions in progressive and equitable ways. Helland (2006) argues that the phenomenon of 'resource poverty' is becoming a major aspect of poverty in such societies. Yet arguably, with the loss of lifestyles and heritage, 'cultural poverty' may be a more destructive force, with uncertain implications for evolving agro-pastoralist communities and vulnerable groups such as women and girls.

2.2 AGRO-PASTORALIST SOCIETY AND GENDER²⁶

Agro-pastoralist women face extreme marginalization and gender-bias

With various regional pressures and trends, agro-pastoralist groups in East Africa often struggle at the margins of national, and regional social, economic and political life with little protection of their assets, and living in often-underserved regions in terms of health, education and infrastructure. In this context, **women have been arguably 'doubly marginalized'**, since they experience both regional marginalization, whilst also negotiating an evolving lifestyle that is often culturally gender-biased, and still misunderstood by many decision makers. In pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies, women and girls' norms, customs and entitlements have been shaped by paternalistic socio-cultural ideas, values and attitudes about gender-related roles and responsibilities. These typically include women and girls' high domestic responsibilities, their limited participation in household and community decision-making (and conflict resolution), and their limited control over productive assets and resources (e.g. land and livestock). With women and girls' secondary status, this has further translated into their limited access to basic services (health and education). Embedded in more complex cultural issues, girls are often further subjected to harmful traditional practices (HTP) including FGM/C, early and arranged marriage, and domestic violence. These norms influence women/girls' agency, life choices and opportunities.

Appendix 5 provides an expanded discussion on pastoralist and agro-pastoralist society, and gender.

2.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT: SOUTH DARFUR, SUDAN

Conflict-affected region with variations in livelihoods, geography, and risk

Turning to the research context of South Darfur in southwest Sudan, this is a region that has been severely conflict-affected. Crisis and war has led to major displacement of the population over 2003-2013. At the time of the research, whilst the state capital, Nyala was deemed peaceful and stable, rural locations were still considered 'insecure' and were highly controlled, necessitating police or UN convoys. Major unrest continued in the Jebel Marra area of Kass, with clashes between non-state armed actors and the government. Infrastructure and services have suffered during the various outbreaks of conflict since 2003, yet the experience of rural communities as IDPs has exposed village people to new ideas, habits, education and health care. This has had knock-on effects to gender roles and responsibilities, with people becoming more 'open' to change, according to local key informants. In particular, IDP camps have increased social interaction between different ethnic groups, and 'required' people to deal with different organisations and services.²⁷

South Darfur's population has recently been estimated at between 3.2 to 5.3 million people.²⁸ Nyala, the state capital is a major centre of a regional trade, connecting South Sudan, Chad, Central Africa, Cameroon, Nigeria and Benin (UNESCO/IESCO, 2017). Administratively, the state is divided into 21 localities (ibid.), including the research locality of **Kass** to the west, and the research locality of **Belil**, neighbouring the capital, Nyala. Local ethnic groups include the Fur, Dajo, Al-Tarjam, Al-Sabah and Fulani, amongst others. Yet traditional community groups and their resources have been affected by major population movements over the past 15 years, triggered by conflict, as well as by natural disasters, including drought. Agriculture is a key livelihood for local people, with 75-80%

²⁶ This is derived from Ritchie (2015).

²⁷ Interview with CIS staff, Nyala, 19 July 2018.

²⁸ Whilst the Bureau of Statistics indicates that the population of South Darfur was 3.2 million, after the separation with East Darfur (2014), the governor called for an updated accurate census and a re-estimate. (UNESCO/IESCO 2017).

residing in the rural areas (ibid.). Major products from the region include oilseeds, dairy products, fish, red meat, and leather. As highlighted by Forcier Consulting, land rights, market dynamics and (youth) unemployment have been identified by CIS as critical issues to address in South Darfur, with conflict dynamics between farmers and pastoralists often at the 'centre of programming efforts'. In particular '**competition over natural resources**' was indicated to be a key driver of conflict. As indicated in recent CIS reports, 2017 saw the UNAMID downsizing in South Darfur and the economic downturn (CIS, 2018). While the 'unprecedented' economic depression has had a countrywide effect, low-income groups in the rural and urban settings have been particularly affected with the price on key commodities increasing up to 200% (ibid). In the two research localities, CIS supports local governance through Village Development Committees (VDCs), and the development of interest groups (including village savings and lending associations (VSLAs)), agricultural tools and training, health and nutrition (through support to clinics and nutrition centres), and water and sanitation (WATSAN) through the rehabilitation of water points. Other international NGOs include World Vision and IMC.

Situated to the west of the capital Nyala, **Belil locality** is characterized by flatlands with agricultural zones and valleys. It is an ethnically **Fur area with a mixture of Arab / nomadic tribes**, with livelihoods related to **agro-pastoralism**. Key crops include sorghum (main) as well as maize, millet, and groundnuts. Other livelihood activities pursued by men include brick-making, charcoal production, and animal feed (fodder). Meanwhile, women supplement incomes with handicrafts (e.g. basket and mat making, and improved (mud) stoves). CIS indicates that there has been 'major change' in people everyday lives since 2003 due to war, and displacement, with people forced out of villagers and into IDP camps. Major IDP camps in the locality include Al Salaam and Kalma camp. Service-wise, many schools were completely destroyed in the conflict years, leaving an initial gap in service provision. Today, the coverage of primary schools has been re-expanded in particular.²⁹ In 2003, there were no formal health services in the rural areas but today such services have been established, even if patchy. Environmentally, the land has been significantly affected by deforestation and degradation, and land disputes are ongoing today. Socially, people are reported to have 'opened up' after years of conflict and displacement, and there is an increase in general education attendance. Major international NGOs in the region currently include World Vision, and CIS with local partners (e.g. Jabra Organisation, Amal Darfur and Global Aid Hand).

Towards the north west of the state, **Kass locality** is a traditional high fertile agricultural area, **dominated by the Fur tribe** (80%). In the past, livelihoods were agro-pastoralist with people engaged in farming and keeping livestock. Today livelihoods are more farm-based with fewer livestock, alongside small trading. Men also are engaged in brick-making, and charcoal production. Similar to Belil, women supplement incomes with handicrafts (e.g. basket and mat making, and stoves). With war and turbulence after 2003, major livestock resources were greatly depleted.³⁰ During the tensions (2003-4, and 2007-8), people fled from their villages and there was a significant increase in inhabitants in the main urban centre, Kass town. Today 70-80% of the original villages remain deserted, with villagers returning only now during the rainy season to farm (often leaving women and children in the IDP camps). More permanent return to the villages is inhibited by a lack of basic services but also continued insecurity (between state and non-state armed actors).³¹ Kass town is deemed safer with better access for IDPs to services, including education and



²⁹ Notably, Tearfund was a key supporter of education but was expelled by the government in 2017.

³⁰ Interview with CIS Logistics and Safety Officer, Nyala, 19 July 2018.

³¹ In particular around Jebel Marra.

health.³² A return to the villages has also been held back by localized land conflicts and disputes, as pastoralist people have often moved onto village land. A major challenge in Kass is access to water, and this is often a flashpoint between pastoralists and village people (with pastoralists damaging land and contaminating water resources).³³ Existing villages now comprise IDPs from other villages. Major international NGOs in the region currently include World Vision, and CIS with local partners (e.g. Ashrook Organisation, Amal Darfur and Global Aid Hand).

In summary, this chapter has illustrated the environmental fragility of rural communities in East Africa, with women/girls facing notable vulnerability. Culturally agro-pastoralist societies typically have elaborate patriarchal social institutions shaping women and girls' social norms, including their domestic responsibilities, participation in decision-making, access to productive resources, access to basic services and 'harmful traditional practices'. An overview of the specific research location in Sudan - South Darfur (Belil and Kass localities) - was presented, with agro-pastoralism highlighted as a major source of livelihoods in a complex context of conflict and displacement.

³² Kass is in fact known for its higher educational facilities (and technical school)

³³ Ibid.

III KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND BARRIERS FOR RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SOUTH DARFUR, SUDAN (KASS AND BELIL)

Extensive studies have examined women in East African agro-pastoralist societies to better understand women and girls' traditional norms/barriers and indicative processes of change, and both positive and negative impacts on communities. Building on this, recent CARE research has looked closer at pastoralist women's evolving agro-pastoralist livelihoods and social norms, and current gender dynamics in the prevailing situation of recurrent (environmental) crises (Ritchie 2015-2017). These reports have provided interesting glimpses into the state of evolving norms and barriers of pastoralist women and girls highlighted in Chapter 2, including harmful traditional practices (e.g. FGM/C and early marriage), the weight of domestic chores, women's control over assets and productive resources, gender relations and decision-making, and women and girls' access to basic services.

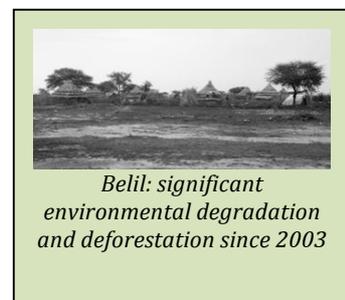
Taking a closer look at these socio-cultural dynamics in the context of Sudan, this chapter presents **key findings** from the research in **South Darfur**. This generates deeper insights into the scope of these evolving social barriers for **rural women and girls** in light of current trends, pressures and interventions, including the country crisis since 2013. The chapter specifically outlines the current **status of selected traditional norms**, and **local attitudes/perspectives** within and outside of target communities, and **indications of change** (for whom and geographical variations). The chapter draws attention to **norm dynamics**, and the emerging impact of change on pastoralist women and girls' lives and community development. The chapter initially discusses the particularities of the target communities in Belil and Kass in South Darfur.

3.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TARGET VILLAGES IN SOUTH DARFUR

Target research villages and IDP areas were located in the rural areas of Belil locality, and Kass locality. Villages visited were situated at varying distances from urban centres (15-35 km into the interior). Access to the villages was via dirt roads, with access described to be particularly constrained for up to three months of the year (due to the rains).

Research sites in Belil locality

Elaborating briefly on the **target villages in Belil**, the two community settlement areas visited were located approximately 20 and 35 km respectively from Nyala. The nearest village cluster, Draib El Reigh consisted of approximately 400 households, whilst Geldy, a poorer village, was reported to comprise around 1300 households. Local families live in a permanent village setting with traditional **straw and mud walled housing structures**. Most households were engaged in farming and **agro-pastoralism**. The main crops cultivated include millet, sorghum, groundnut, okra and sesame with additional vegetables (e.g. tomato, onion, radish) and fruits (watermelon). Men also collect firewood and produced charcoal for the market. As supplementary activities, women were also involved in handicraft activities (e.g. making mats, floor brushes, baskets) and petty trading (tea). In terms of **household marital situations**, a total of **25-60%** of households were reported to be polygamous (notably higher in Geldy), and over of households **50%**

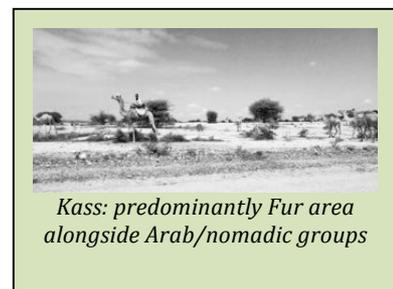


were female headed (widows and divorcees).³⁴ Notably, an estimated 30% of total households were cited to be ‘divorced’ women. **Education-wise, schooling levels were low amongst the women:** with most reporting a few years of primary or *khalwa* education (with only 1-2 completing secondary in Draib El Reigh). In terms of basic **services**, both community areas had primary schools in their village areas, but only Draib El Reigh had a secondary school. Both locations had health posts. At present, there are no formal electricity supplies, and only sporadic solar power. With respect to social organisation, in Draib El Reigh, in addition to Village Development Committees (VDCs), several village groups were cited including committees for women, youth and WASH. In Geldy, agricultural, WASH and health committees were mentioned. **Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs)** have been established by CIS in both locations but were still fairly new. **Major development actors** included predominantly CIS, Global Aid Hand and Amal Darfur.

Two sites were also included in **Al Salaam IDP Camp** in Belil. The camp is located 17 km from Nyala, and comprises a mix of ethnically Fur, and nomadic pastoralists groups such as the Zaghawa people, with a total of around 57,800 inhabitants.³⁵ Similar to local villages, local families live in traditional **straw and mud walled housing structures**. Households were engaged in **farming, daily labour** (in Nyala, for example in construction) and **petty trading** (e.g. oil, nuts, dates, sugar, tea³⁶). Crops cultivated include millet. In terms of **household marital situations**, a total of 30% of households were reported to be polygamous, and over **25-40% were female headed** (widows and divorcees).³⁷ Notably, an estimated 15-20% of total households were cited to be ‘divorced’ women. **Education-wise, schooling levels were low amongst the older women:** with most boasting only a few years of primary or *khalwa* education (with only 1-2 completing secondary and at university). In terms of access to basic **services**, this was described to be ‘fairly good’, with three primary schools and one secondary school, and three health centres. At present, there are no formal electricity supplies however, and only sporadic solar power. With respect to social organisation, WASH and health committees were mentioned. As yet, there are no **VSLAs** in the camp. **Major development actors** included predominantly CIS (WASH), IMC (health clinics) and World Vision (livelihoods and agriculture).

Research sites in Kass locality

Elaborating briefly on the **target villages in Kass**, both village settlement areas were located approximately 15-30 km from Kass town. Jimaiza Kamara consisted of approximately 12,000 households, whilst Tanakaro was a smaller village, part of Sangetaa cluster with 500 households.³⁸ Local families live in a permanent village setting with traditional **straw and mud walled housing structures**. Most households were engaged in farming and **trading**. Tanakaro residents also had a few small livestock (typically 3-4 goats per household). The main crops cultivated include millet, sorghum, groundnut, okra with additional vegetables (e.g. onion) and fruits (watermelon). Men also collect firewood for the market (Jimaiza Kamara). As supplementary activities, women were also involved in processing and trading (ground millet). In terms of **household marital situations**, a total of 30-70% of households were reported to be



³⁴ Citing much higher numbers than the men’s groups, the women’s groups described over 70% of households as ‘women-led’, although this may include cases where men ‘visit only’ due to having 2-3 wives.

³⁵ Interview with CIS Head of Office, Nyala, 19 July 2018.

³⁶ Men were reported to be taking over these trading activities!

³⁷ Again, citing higher numbers than the men’s groups, the women’s groups described over 50% of households as ‘women-led’.

³⁸ Numbers unverified.

polygamous (notably higher in Jimaiza Kamara), and over of households **50% were female headed** (widows and divorcees).³⁹ Notably, an estimated 20-30% of total households were cited to be 'divorced' women. **Education-wise, schooling levels were low amongst the (older) women:** once again, most women reported having a few years of primary or *khalwa* education. In terms of basic **services**, both community areas had primary schools in their village areas⁴⁰ although both lacked secondary schools (students were attending secondary level in Kass). The existence of health services ranged, with one nutrition centre in Jimaiza Kamara, and one clinic and nutrition centre in Sangetaa village centre only. At present, there are no formal electricity supplies, and only sporadic solar power. With respect to social organisation, VDCs, WASH, and health committees were mentioned. **Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs)** have also recently been established by CIS in both Jimaiza Kamara and Tanakaro⁴¹ (in 2018). **Major development actors** included predominantly CIS, and Al Sharook.

3.2 SCOPE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' NORMS AND BARRIERS⁴²

With environmental pressures and local development, agro-pastoralist regions are undergoing significant and rapid processes of change that are having fundamental impacts on rural communities, in particular women (Ritchie 2015-2017; Flintan 2008, 2011). This section turns to the core findings of the research from South Darfur in Sudan exploring the **scope of pastoralist women and girls' traditional norms and persisting barriers**, including harmful traditional practices (e.g. early and arranged marriage, and gender violence), the weight of domestic chores, women's control over assets and productive resources, gender relations and decision-making, and women and girls' access to basic services. As indicated in Chapter 1, the scope and boundaries of norms, and related attitudes, are described to range at a local level, with much variation and unpredictability between individuals and communities. In this discussion, the trends of change, and range of specific norms are highlighted, with an appreciation of local diversity (and interpretation).

3.2.1 'Harmful' traditional practices

In terms of 'harmful traditional practices', the research took a special focus on crucial socio-cultural traditions (and local attitudes/practices) related to **female circumcision:** (Female Genital Cutting), **early and arranged marriage**, and **gender-based violence**.

3.2.1(1) Female Circumcision: Female Genital Cutting (FGC)

A traditional and deeply rooted custom in pastoralist communities in Northern and Eastern Africa, Female Genital Cutting (FGC) or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is the cultural practice of removing all or parts of the girls' clitoris. Variations of this invasive practice are carried out according to local customs and beliefs. In its simple form ('Type I'), this refers to some level of excising of the clitoris of a girl or woman. In its more extreme form, this includes 'infibulation' ('Type III'): the excising of the clitoris and labia, and the stitching together of the edges of the vulva (the external opening of the vagina). The **health side effects** from FGM/C include immediate complications such 'severe pain,

³⁹ Again, citing higher numbers than the men's groups, the women's groups described over 50% of households as 'women-led'.

⁴⁰ Jimaiza Kamara was reported to have one primary school, whilst Sangetaa had three schools (with one in Tanakaro).

⁴¹ In the central village in Sangetaa central, VSLAs were first established in 2012 and there are now a total of 30 VSLAs in operation today.

⁴² The background sections to the various norms draws heavily from Ritchie (2015b), and CARE Ethiopia's extensive research/experience of Afar and Boran pastoralist women and girls' norms and barriers (e.g. CARE Ethiopia 2009).

shock, haemorrhage (bleeding), tetanus or sepsis (bacterial infection), urine retention, open sores in the genital region and injury to nearby genital tissue' (28 Too Many 2013). There may be immediate, medium and long-term effects to FGM/C, with immediate effects relating to pain, infection, and risk of death; medium-term effects relating to urinary infections, cysts and dehydration; and longer-term effects, linked to marriage phobia, difficulties in sex and childbirth.

FGM/C has been a **common, deeply rooted and condoned practice in East Africa** until recent times, particularly in pastoralist communities. In Sudan, FGM/C and re-infibulation may be practiced for a range of reasons, including 'beliefs about honour and shame, virginity, marriageability, and male sexual pleasure' (CIS 2013). At a community level, FGM/C has also been perceived to control a woman's sexuality, with circumcised women venerated as ideal: 'obedient, docile, faithful, and an upholder of tradition' (ibid.). Most often, women cite 'custom and tradition' as the main motivation for the practice. Other reasons cited by women include 'religious demands, cleanliness/hygiene, and better marriage prospects' (ibid.). Whilst FGM/C is not endorsed within Islam, a 'weak' hadith indicates reference to the practice (Newell-Jones, 2016). Ultimately, the notion of purification is also important and related to reducing girls' sexual desire and hence sexual activity, with FGM/C 'protecting' girls from pre-marital sex (Ibid). In traditional pastoralist communities in particular, the cutting is believed to control women's sexual behaviour (and potential 'hyperactivity'), thus reducing pre-marital sex (ensuring virginity) and adultery (ensuring faithfulness). FGM/C is often considered a pre-condition and purification for the important ritual of marriage. And in traditional society, marriage itself is often deemed 'essential' in order to receive respect as a woman, and for her to have status and voice. A key advantage of FGM/C is emphasized to be 'social and religious acceptability' to be part of society and to marry. Protection from rape has been another cited advantage.

Across the region, efforts at tightening local legislation have been formulated in recent years. For example, FGM/C is now prohibited in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Penal Code 2005), as well as in Kenya (Kenyan Prohibition of the FGM/C Act of 2011⁴³). In more challenging contexts such as the semi-autonomous state of Somaliland, there are no specific laws related to FGM/C. A Provisional Constitutional decree (2012) was introduced prohibiting girls' circumcision, yet with no indication of penalties and for whom (Newell-Jones, 2016) and a draft national policy on FGM awaits endorsement of key ministries. In Sudan, various legal measures have been taken to promote women's protection from harmful practices including the development of a National Plan for Combating Gender-based Violence in the Ministry of Justice in 2005, the establishment of a Family & Child Protection Unit in 2006 managed by the Ministry of Interior, the development of a National Women's Empowerment Policy in 2007. For FGM/C in particular, a National Strategy for Eradication of FGM/C was drafted in 2008.⁴⁴ In 2013, the Ministry of Health indicated that FGM was included as a harmful traditional practice in the midwifery-training curriculum. Demonstrating **growing support for FGM/C eradication by the Sudanese government**, in May 2018, WHO facilitated a multi-country conference on FGM, held in Khartoum. According to the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security in Khartoum, whilst there are ongoing efforts to criminalize FGM at the National level⁴⁵, there are now four states including South Darfur (as well as South Kordofan, West Darfur and Gedaref)

⁴³ The earlier anti-FGM law of 2001 was notably reinforced to prohibit all forms of FGM at any age, criminalising the aiding of FGM, and those stigmatising women/girls who have not undergone FGM ((28 Too Many 2013).

⁴⁴ Government of Sudan. Ministry of Welfare & Social Security (2010), *Sudan Millennium Development Goals Progress Report* in CIS 2013.

⁴⁵ The Ministry of Social Welfare indicates that they are presently working to criminalise FGM, alongside other adjustments to the Criminal Law (interview with Ministry of Social Affairs, Khartoum, 10 May 2018).

that have extra articles related to FGM/C.⁴⁶

However, even with the development of formal legislation and policies, progress remains uneven geographically across and within East African countries, with changes in ‘attitudes and beliefs’ proving particularly challenging (28 Too Many, 2013). In regions such as northern Ethiopia, critical turning points are being made, with FGM increasingly **considered a ‘shameful’ practice by local people**, a crucial step towards social change (Ritchie, 2016b). Yet even where a father’s attitude changes, the **women of the family** may still pursue this for their daughters to ensure their ‘marriageability’. Emphasizing its deep-seated roots, an earlier study conducted by CARE in Ethiopia (2005) underscored the ‘inseparability’ of religious/cultural ideas, marriage and women’s position and value in the community as continuing to drive these practices. In Sudan, UNFPA and UNICEF take the lead in advocacy related to reproductive and sexual health and child rights (CIS 2013). A number of international and national NGOs, and academic institutions also support these efforts, including DKT, PPFA, and Ahfad University.

In Sudan, FGM/C is still highly prevalent as indicated by the Sudan Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in 2014, with an estimated 86.6% of women (aged 15-49 years) having undergone the procedure in Sudan, and an estimated **88.2% of women in South Darfur**.⁴⁷ This usually entails the most severe form, WHO Type III, known locally as the ‘Pharaonic’ type, involving the cutting of the clitoris, flesh removed from the labia minor and/or labia major, and then the skin sewn closed leaving a very small vagina orifice. Other types include WHO Type I or Type II, known locally as the Sunna and ‘Sunna 2’ with the clitoris nicked or cut, some flesh removed, and in Type II the orifice partially sewn closed. Customarily, Sudanese girls would be cut around 10-14 years of age. Re-infibulation, or re-circumcision, is a traditional practice performed on circumcised women who have given birth. Traditionally FGM/C is performed by the traditional village birthing attendants (58.5%) ‘with little or no medical or surgical training, or knowledge of anatomy, using razors and knives with no appropriate medication to treat infections’ (CIS, 2013). Yet similar to Somaliland, the concerning medicalization of the practice has been observed in northern Sudanese states.

Looking closer at local attitudes, in the Sudan Household Survey in 2010, more women (42.3%) than men (27.4%) were interested to continue the practice, with pro- FGM/C attitudes among both women and men being highest in the East of Sudan (except Gedarif) and the notably Darfur Region, indicating an increasing level of prevalence at that time in Darfur. The survey indicated that among married women aged 15-49 years, over 70% of women in South Darfur expressed an intention to circumcise their daughters compared to the national average of 48.3%. Yet **educated** (primary and secondary+) and **wealthier women** in were less likely to express intent to circumcise their daughters. Recent research under the MICS (2014) trends show that national attitudes may be further changing with only 40.9% of women aged 15-49 years keen to pursue the practice – although belief in the continuation of FGM/C was notably still high in South Darfur at 52.8%.

Box 3.1: The Saleema Initiative in Sudan

Supported by UNICEF, the nation-wide ‘Saleema Initiative’ has aimed to foster ‘positive communication tools’ to change the way that people discuss and think about female genital cutting, and to promote new ‘positive terminology’ around the ‘natural’ (uncut) bodies of girls and women. In spearheading new narratives, Saleema aims to stimulate critical discussions about FGM/C at family and community levels through new ‘talk pathways’ and in new ‘talk content’.

Source:
<https://www.unicef.org/sudan/pr>

Led by UNFPA and UNICEF, an innovative nation-wide advocacy strategy was launched in

⁴⁶ UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. Annual Report (2011).

⁴⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Sudan (2016)

2008 by the Sudan's National Council on Child Welfare (NCCW) and civil society partners known as the **'Saleema Initiative'** (Box 3.1). The campaign aimed to promote new dialogue on FGM/C and to foster collective behavioural change within communities – celebrating 'Saleema' or uncut girls.⁴⁸ In Arabic, saleema means 'whole, healthy in body and mind, unharmed, intact, pristine, and untouched, in a God-given condition' (ibid). A key slogan of the campaign was: *'Every Girl is Born Saleema...Let Every Girl Grow Saleema'*. Complementing this, Sudan is now participating in the *Global Joint Programme to Abandon FGM*, with five states currently targeted for advocacy and training events, including South Darfur. Indicating the complexity of actor influence, Newell-Jones (2016) drew attention to **different stakeholders** in the practice and their perspectives, knowledge and activism, from community members (men and women), local leaders (traditional and religious), local cutters, medical practitioners, NGOs and CSOs, to laws enforcers and parliamentarians. On the whole, pro-FGM/C religious leaders may support the Sunna version as opposed to the *Pharonic* version.

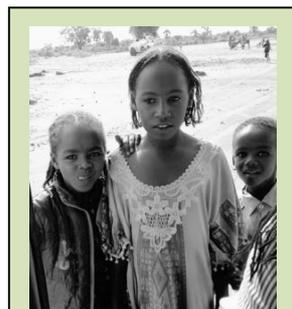
Research Findings in South Darfur

Prevalence and type of FGM

Findings from this research indicate that FGM/C practices **still strongly persist** in the research areas, although there has been a **slight decrease in prevalence** and it is now **'hidden'**⁴⁹, as emphasized in discussions with Global Aid Hand. Whilst the prevalence has only slightly shifted, the **'lighter touch' Sunna type of FGM/C is now the most common type** (with some including a few minor stitches only) and the prevailing 'fashion', from previous 'Pharonic' forms of FGM/C. This appears to be a reaction to some of the key messages of the 'Saleema' campaign, namely that FGM/C affects child delivery. Sunna was perceived as 'safer' for women and girls.

*FGM remains highly prevalent in Belil but less common in Kass and IDP areas yet now **hidden**, and shift in type (Sunna) / age*

In the **target villages**, **more than 80-90% of adolescent girls are still being reported to be circumcised at the village level in Belil**, from levels in all communities close to 100% previously. In **Kass** however, the situation appears more **mixed across different social groups (with a reported prevalence of 10-90%)**, and notably **less popular amongst Fur communities**. Respondents in Jimaiza Kamara indicated that they had almost halted the tradition entirely, with less than 5-10% of adolescents still having it done. According to local CSOs, Sangetaa settlement (Fur areas) was also reported to have decreased, with just 10% of adolescents undergoing the procedure, now done 'secretly'. Meanwhile, FGM/C was still highly prevalent in the neighbouring Arab community on the outskirts of Sangetaa. Notably, according to a town dweller from Kass, the Fur communities around Kass did not commonly traditionally perform circumcision at the time of displacement but became encouraged to do so after 'being embarrassed and ashamed' in IDP camps in Kass town: teenage girls and women alike then immediately opted for it. Notably, there was **higher prevalence in more remote/uneducated areas, particularly amongst Arab groups**. Belil was indicated to be tougher and more resistant to change than Kass: 'girls still feel ashamed without circumcision in the village' (Head of Women's Union). Meanwhile, in the **IDP areas**, with



Higher prevalence of FGM/C in Arab nomadic groups

⁴⁸ https://www.unicef.org/sudan/protection_6092.html

⁴⁹ Previously ceremonies were conducted following the procedure.

greater awareness raising by NGOs, there is now perhaps a more significant reduction in the practice, with an estimated **30- 50% of adolescent girls being circumcised**⁵⁰.

Discussions with local NGOs and local health officials indicate that particularly in urban and more educated areas such as Nyala, there is now a **tangible shift away from the practice**, particularly after the Saleema campaign, and it is now considered 'backward and illegal'. Likewise in the capital Khartoum, it is beginning to be perceived as an 'old practice' and 'disappearing'⁵¹. According to a local NGO worker and health officials in Nyala, around 10-40% of urban girls in South Darfur may still be circumcised (secretly), and up to 10% of women may request to be re-sewn after childbirth. This is described to be typical in less educated households, 'where women do not work outside the house'. Anecdotes indicate that **older men still place a value on this** in new marriages. Meanwhile, in the village context, 'FGM is still very rooted in people's psychology: people don't show that they support it, but secretly they do' (Global Aid Hand).

Age of FGM: 'younger' girls

Across the different village groups, the **average age of conducting FGM/C** has also changed in the past several years. Circumcision is now typically conducted on girls at **7-10 years old**, with some cases of girls being circumcised at 5-6 years old. This contrasted to the average reported age of 10 years old for girls having FGM/C⁵², common several years earlier, reiterated across all village respondents. The women's groups described that for the new *Sunna* procedure, it was now 'simple' and considered by some as a 'decoration', with recovery rates cited to be 'just 3-4 days', as opposed to a few weeks to a month (*Pharonic* version). The age drop may be related to **increasing school participation and the confidence of older girls** (posing challenges to the mothers' authority and objecting).

Local actors: Decision makers, cutters and anti-FGM trained midwives

Traditional cutters (known as 'healer women' or *mualig taklid*⁵³) **are still primarily responsible** for carrying out the procedure in the target villages (**often the traditional birth attendant (TBA) in the village**). And the girls' mothers tend to arrange this as the key household-level 'decision-makers' on the practice (it is not the choice of the girls), often encouraged by maternal and paternal grandmothers. Meanwhile, **local trained midwives** are perceived as those campaigning against FGM/C, from a health perspective. Contrasting to reports from north Sudan, there was no indication of the medicalization of cutting (i.e. conducted by health specialists such as doctors, nurses and midwives). Whilst much less outspoken and forthcoming than adolescent girls for example in Kenya (Ritchie, 2016), the adolescent girls nonetheless highlighted some of the problems with FGM, particularly the *Pharonic* version, especially during delivery.

Beliefs and motivation

Traditional beliefs and values still prevail in rural communities particularly in Belil and Arab areas in Kass, with women motivated by peer pressure and 'marriage prospects' to cut their daughters, and beliefs that it is still supported by the Koran⁵⁴. Even younger mothers that are beginning to object feel compelled to follow the predominant customs of the village, particularly in less educated areas where there is stigma attached to girls that remain uncut. In general, adolescent girls are now not actually in favour of FGM, but feel it

⁵⁰ Results were very mixed in the IDP camp, with women and men stating it was still continuing and adolescent girls suggesting that the practice was much lower.

⁵¹ Key informant interview with CIS Health and Nutrition Advisor, Khartoum, 7 May 2018.

⁵² Cases of younger girls having the procedure done in the past were indicated, but were just less typical.

⁵³ Key informant interview with CIS Health and Nutrition Advisor, Khartoum, 7 May 2018.

⁵⁴ Key informant interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July.

is 'expected' in the culture. As described by UNICEF in the Saleema campaign, girls emphasized that they would be shamed and called '*ghalfa*⁵⁵' for not being circumcised. As such many have even requested to their mothers to have it done (adolescent group, Geldy, Belil). Yet elders and male leaders in Belil indicate that they now think it is against the law⁵⁶. In educated urban areas however, there is a **tangible movement against FGM/C**, with decreasing numbers of new cases described, particularly amongst 'less educated' families. **Men and boys' attitudes** towards female circumcision have been identified as critical in regional studies and remain so in South Darfur, although men highlighted that such decisions still belong to the women. Meanwhile, whilst **some religious leaders** in the urban areas have spoken out against FGM/C (see below), at the village level the picture is more mixed, with an implicit (religious) condoning of the practice - in particular the shift towards the Sunna FGM/C practice (in not speaking out).

Campaigns

Awareness-raising of the ill-health effects of FGM/C have been conducted by health workers and NGOs under the **Saleema initiative**. UNICEF officials in Nyala highlighted that under this national campaign all communities in South Darfur were covered, and tools included posters, media and village level discussions. With trained midwives, this has **spurred new conversations about FGM/C**, particularly problems around *Pharonic* circumcision. Complementing this, recent locally-based campaigns supported by the Ministry of Social Welfare in South Darfur include '*Women's Right to Life*', promoting the eradication of FGM to save mothers in childbirth. Yet in the course of such campaigns local organisations, and even local schools have been held back in promoting discussion and eradication, with the **stalled efforts at national criminalization legislation** and in the **absence of such topics in school curriculum** (*'In each [FGM] workshop, we ask for this...'*), Ministry of Social Welfare, Nyala). Further to this, there are **mixed attitudes of local and national level religious leaders** and politicians; and thus, there is an aversion to discussing such sensitive topics in public. Whilst religious leaders did speak up during the Saleema campaign, according to local women representatives in Nyala, 'religious people have not yet played key roles [in local efforts to move away from FGM]...[but] it is their responsibility'.

With persisting cultural habits, there was sensitivity around FGM/C from all of the various groups in the target villages, with women and men almost completely denying the continuation of the practice in Belil (despite the adolescents admitting that it was still the norm for over 80% of girls), in reaction possibly to the number of workshops held by NGOs. In Tanakaro, the men's groups were more open, indicating the high prevalence of the practice but also a lack of NGO awareness training, with the only change to the form (now Sunni). Several of the adolescent girl groups highlighted that FGM/C was changing, initially becoming lighter, and that further change would need more time. Meanwhile in the IDP areas, there was a more animated discussion with local women, with many explaining why they were shifting away from the practice (*'NGO training and even some religious people are against it'*). Indicating the **role of informal authority** in the camp, one woman described that she would inform the local leaders if people starting 'shaming' my daughters for not having it done. Women elaborated that it depended in the camp on the 'family tribe' i.e. it was still common with groups such as the 'Arab people' in the camp setting.

It was evident that across the village-based groups (particularly in Belil), there is still broad support for FGM/C and a sense that it would be 'shameful' not to conduct this

⁵⁵ '*Ghalfa*' is a 'derogatory expression suggesting disgrace, degradation, vile social status and inappropriate behavior' (http://saleema.net/what_is_saleema.php).

⁵⁶ Key informant interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July.

procedure. Whilst considered cultural, it has perhaps now been given arguably extra weight by perceived religious links for the so-called ‘Sunna’ version. Notably amongst the women’s groups in the village, there was still a persisting belief that without FGM/C, **girls will be refused marriage**. Besides the UNICEF Saleema campaign, and Women’s Day messaging⁵⁷, there has been a **lack of more rigorous ‘every day’ public discussion** in the media (including local radio and TV) due to a mix of public sensitivity and prevailing traditional ideas. And with an absence of legislation, there have been **no known cases of prosecution of local cutters** or responsible parents.⁵⁸ However, it appears that rural communities may benefit from more interactive approaches. For example, **theatre** has recently been successfully employed by CIS to open up local dialogue on harmful practices such as FGM amongst other topics - indicating a need to engage further with such medium for social dialogue on taboo issues.⁵⁹

Box 3.2: Evolving perspectives on FGM – a slow process of change

“Today the pharonic type is no longer really practiced and we practice a lighter [improved] type called Sunna...these are our traditions and customs and they cannot be changed easily...it needs time” (Adolescent group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

“We have changed the FGM type to be more of a ‘decoration’...because people will laugh at girls that have not had it done” (Men’s group, Geldy, Belil)

“FGM is common here and it is our tradition from our grandmothers...these days however we usually do a lighter touch because of delivery problems” (Women’s group, Tanakaro, Kass)

“We are changing [FGM] step by step and people are becoming more aware...but some decisions are taken [autonomously] by women” (Men’s group, Al Salaam IDP camp, Belil)

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in FGM/C

- Change in **type of FGM/C** with a **shift towards Type I Sunna version**; and change in the (average) age of FGM/C: now conducted on girls of **7-10 years old** (from 10-13 years old⁶⁰).
- In rural areas, FGM/C incidence may have decreased from 100% to **80-90% in Belil, but a more mixed picture in Kass (10-90%)**.
- In IDP areas, FGM/C incidence may have reduced further to >30-50%, with a shift towards *Sunna* version (10-20%).
- More remote/under-served, less educated and Arab nomadic communities demonstrate more traditional attitudes, and slower change in practices.

3.2.1(2) Early and arranged marriage⁶¹

In pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in East Africa, marriage was traditionally viewed as the ‘ultimate goal for a girl and absolutely essential for her future livelihood security’ (CARE Ethiopia 2009). For parents, marriage of daughters may bring both financial and social benefits, with the receipt of dowries, the relief of one less family

⁵⁷ For example, the national radio station, Radio Umdurman broadcasted national messages by the Ministry of Health and UNFPA during the Saleema campaign.

⁵⁸ According to officials and representatives in South Darfur.

⁵⁹ In 2018, a local theatre group was contracted by CIS on Women’s Day to conduct role-plays on FGM (in addition to early marriage, girls’ education and gender-based violence) in 12 villages across Belil and Kass. Much to the surprise of CIS staff, the event triggered enthusiastic debate and discussion at the community level.

⁶⁰ Whilst younger girls were still circumcised in the past, this was less common than today.

⁶¹ This is also commonly referred to as Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM).

member to feed, as well as the social achievement of a married daughter (family honour). For adolescent girls, child marriage can lead to early pregnancy and premature childbirth, which can be fatal⁶² (and an increased overall number of childbirths over her lifetime). It can also lead to ‘social isolation’ (CIS 2013), with educational dropout, and a lack of access to further training opportunities, and subsequent ‘exclusion’ from the broader economy.⁶³ Where young girls are married to older men, there are additional risks of abusive power dynamics, with higher vulnerability of girls to domestic violence.

Adolescent or ‘*underage*’ marriage (below 18 years) is common in East Africa, and ‘*early marriage*’⁶⁴ (below 13 years old) is also practiced. Early marriage can lead to early pregnancy with associated risks to health, as well as constraining the completion of girls’ education. In some pastoralist communities, girls’ marriage has traditionally followed the start of her menstruation, ‘arranged’ by the girl’s family (*‘arranged marriage’*). This could be entered into voluntarily, or with family coercion (known as ‘forced marriage’⁶⁵). Arranged marriage predominantly relates to a man approaching a girls’ family, and if approved, the parents of the girl proceeding with the marital process with the corresponding family. The family of the girl may receive several marriage proposals, and an eventual ‘bride price’ is negotiated in terms of cattle (traditionally) or money. Arranged marriage can also relate to situations where a father offers his daughter to another family. A ‘forced’ arranged marriage relates to marriages that are conducted without the girl’s consent, and may include ‘compensation’ marriages, where girls are offered in marriage to resolve disputes. In Ethiopia and Kenya, research showed that the general marriage age was rising amongst local pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, with some girls getting married later at around 16 or 17 years old (particularly in areas close to urban centres). Those remaining at secondary school were indicated to marry at 18 or even later (CARE Ethiopia 2009; Ritchie 2015, 2016). In neighbouring South Sudan, there were new trends of strong ‘choice’ driven teenage girl marriages, particularly for those that dropped out of school.

In Sudan, CIS’s country gender study highlighted the high prevalence of early and forced marriage with drivers linked to family concerns over puberty and sexuality – ‘i.e. the fear of shame or dishonor [of pre-marital relations and sex], poverty, and the perception that younger girls make obedient wives’ (CIS, 2013). In 2014, Sudan’s Multi-Indicator Cluster survey (MICS) indicated that over 20% of 15-19 year olds were married (and up to 23.4% in South Darfur).⁶⁶ In rural areas across the country, this was estimated to be 26%. Yet adolescent marriage appears to be dropping, with higher proportions of older women reporting adolescent marriage.⁶⁷ Teenage marriage was indicated to be more common among the **poorest households** and among those with little or **no education** (over 40% of married 15-19 year olds had no education). **Spousal age differences** were also

⁶² Early pregnancy and childbirth are indicated to be the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls aged 15-19 years old globally <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/3/child-marriages-39000-every-day-more-than-140-million-girls-will-marry-between-2011-and-2020> The infants of adolescent mothers are reported to also be 50% more likely to die in their first year compared to children born to mothers in their twenties (Save the Children and UNFPA). *Adolescent sexual and reproductive health toolkit for humanitarian settings, 2009* (p33). Source: www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_ASRHtoolkit_english.pdf in CARE South Sudan (2016b).

⁶³ UN Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. ‘Widowhood: Invisible women, secluded or excluded. December, 2001 cited in CIS (2013)

⁶⁴ Early marriage puts girls at risk of domestic violence, forced sexual relations, reduced levels of sexual and reproductive health, and lower levels of education (Save the Children, 2004). Children born to teenage mothers are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight and are 50% more likely to die in the first year as compared to children born to women in their twenties.

⁶⁵ It is challenging to strictly identify a marriage as ‘forced’, with various degrees of consent in arranged marriages (including a girl’s ‘agreement’ under pressure of family obligation or even physical threats).

⁶⁶ Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Sudan (2016)

⁶⁷ 38% of 15-49 year olds (56% in South Darfur) entering into a marital union before their 18th birthday (MICS 2014).

significant, with over 39% of 15-19 year olds marrying a man more than 10 years older than them.⁶⁸ Further to this, the continued practice of **polygamy and dowries** - which can foster ideas of women as property - are also common in Sudan. Over **20%** of married women aged 15-49 years were in polygamous unions (and up to 32% of married women with no education).⁶⁹ Polygamy is particularly high in South Darfur, with over 40% of married women (15-49 year old) in such unions. Yet indicating **trends of change in the new generation**, only 7.7% of married younger women (15-19 years) were in polygamous relationships.⁷⁰

Despite legislation in East Africa, early (under 14) and underage (under 18) marriage is in fact still highly prevalent in many rural communities. In Kenya and Zambia, two major reported drivers of 'child marriage' (under 18 years) included school dropout and pregnancy (ICRW 2016). Poverty and economic factors may also influence early marriage amongst agro-pastoralist groups⁷¹, particularly with continued payment of dowries, as well as the girls' own desire to leave home to 'gain responsibility and community respect' (CARE Somalia 2016, Ritchie 2017). Divorce is hence challenging for women to obtain, with complications over the return payment of the dowry by the bride's family. In Sudan, the Sharia-based Personal Status Law was introduced in 1991 as a legal framework for marriage practices. The law indicated that marriage is permissible from the age of 'tamyeez', related to 'the ability to differentiate /discern between options, to distinguish between good and bad'. According to this law, tamyeez is ten years old (CIS 2013). A guardian may give a 'mature' female (i.e. a girl that shows signs of puberty) in marriage if she consents to the husband and to the dowry.⁷² The husband is obliged to give the bride a dowry and the law stipulates that the dowry is the property of the wife and her family (Articles 27-28).⁷³ Indicating subtle legal gender differences, a 10 year-old male may be permitted to marry if it is considered within his interest. Yet a 10 year old female would need the permission of a judge to ensure the husband is suitable and the dowry fair. This contradicted an earlier law however, the Sudan Code of Civil Proceedings of 1984 (Article 22 (1)) which indicated that marriage is a contractual act between those reaching the 'age of majority', specified as 18 years.

Taking more progressive steps, in 1990, Sudan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defining a child as 'every human being below the age of eighteen years' (Article 1). This convention is argued to have been 'instrumental' in advocating for child rights in Sudan (El Nagar 2017). Whilst the CRC does not specifically elaborate on child marriage, it provides a 'number of norms and protective measures for children that collectively provide an enabling framework for tackling child marriage' (ibid.). As a platform for such action, the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan (2005) 'Rights of Women and Children' (32.5) indicates that the State shall 'protect the rights of the child as provided in the international and regional conventions ratified by the Sudan'. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security is the main government institution that is responsible for the regulation and supervision of activities related to families and children.

Meanwhile, in the case of **divorce**, in traditional Islam, a husband has the right to divorce his wife 'unilaterally, without turning to the court, by saying "I divorce you".⁷⁴ Codified in

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ UNFPA (2011), *Child Marriage Profiles Somalia*

⁷² Personal Status of Muslims Act of 1991. Article 34 cited in CIS (2013).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Tønnessen, L. and Roald, A.S. (2007) 'Discrimination in the Name of Religious Freedom: The Rights of Women and Non-Muslims after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan', *CMI Report 2007: 5*, cited in CIS (2013).

1991, under Islamic family law in Sudan women have the right to also seek divorce through the courts in certain circumstances, including: if the husband fails to financially support her; if her husband has more than one wife and does not treat all his wives equally; if the husband has a defect she did not know about before marriage; if the husband suffers from an incurable mental illness; if the husband is impotent; if he behaves cruelly; if he is abroad for more than one year; and if the husband is sentenced to prison for more than two years.⁷⁵ Further, ‘if a wife leaves the marriage, she is no longer legally required to return under the principle of “house of obedience”’. Under Islamic family law, young children usually remain with their mothers in divorce situations, although fathers may attain custody when sons reach 7 years of age and daughters reach 9 years.⁷⁶ Under customary law however, women have no custody rights of their children following divorce.

In rural areas, there is often **little knowledge of legislation and policies** related to children, marriage and sex either within local communities, or within local institutions such as the police and traditional courts. In the case of sexual offences, customary law also contradicts national law: for example, unmarried girls and women that are raped are often forced to marry the perpetrator (with the rapist just charged with paying the bride price). (See Section 3.2.1(3) for further discussion on gender-based violence)

Research Findings in South Darfur

Research in Belil and Kass demonstrated that both early (14 years and under) and underage adolescent marriage (under 18 years), and arranged marriages still persist in target rural communities in South Darfur. There are both similar general trends of change, as well as some divergent indicators within the localities, particularly related to the community location and ethnic groups.

Teenage trend toward ‘choice’ marriages, motivated by school drop out and peer pressure

Marriage age: older adolescents

Current trends in the target villages indicate that marriage is now more common for older adolescent girls. In [target villages](#) in [Belil](#), the common marriage age amongst the rural Fur was now indicated to be around **16-19 years old** (perhaps approximately 60% of marriages), with more remote villages indicating cases of 12-14 years, and villages closer to the city a broader range up to 25 years. In [Kass](#), the common marriage age was indicated to be a little younger, at around **15-18 years old (perhaps at least 60-70% of marriages), with younger ages observed in Arab and nomadic communities**. In [IDP areas](#), the common marriage age was indicated to be similarly around at **15-18 years old**: ‘the main problem here is ‘adolescent marriage’ (Women’s group, Al Salaam camp). This may depend on the ethnic group however. **Early marriage** (under 14 years) is still reported, although it is indicated to be increasingly rare (perhaps 5-10% of cases). As in South Sudan, whilst early marriage may be decreasing, there is now a current **trend or norm for adolescent marriage (under 18 years)**, with girls shown to marry in their mid to late teenage years (and boys marrying from late teenage years to mid twenties). A growing minority of adolescent girls is indicated to marry after 20 years of age (perhaps 30% of marriages), often due to success at school and continuation of higher education. This resonated with reports by CARE’s own staff. Adding nuances to the literature, **the range of marriage age was shown to be broader in the past** (perhaps 10-20 years ago), with marriages covering a wider age spectrum, from **12 to 25 years**.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Tønnessen and Roald (2007)

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Attitudes have changed a great deal in the last 40 years ago according to a Kass resident. There was a pervasive belief at that time that if girls waited until their menstruation started, God would punish them.

Dowry: high and unregulated

In the target villages, **current bride prices** were reported to range from **500-5,000 SDG in addition to other household items such as perfume, clothes, tea and sugar**. Similar prices for rural marriages were reiterated by local civil society representatives in Nyala. Often a basic standard minimum '*sadag*' bride price may be agreed by village members (e.g. 300-500 SDG), but families may then negotiate an additional further price and package together (*'mahar'*). In the IDP areas, prices as high as 10,000 – 15,000 SDG were cited. Higher prices are reported to be influenced by other tribes, for example nomadic and Arab groups that expect higher payment (often in cattle at the village level). At present, according to local NGO staff, there is no legislation to regulate dowry prices. In some cases, the dowry may be agreed to be paid after the couple has children (and even with payment in installments). This was contrasted with much lower prices 'pre-displacement' of 100-300 SDG, plus possible livestock (e.g. 1 cow). Bride price is generally affected by the **family status, wealth of the man⁷⁸, and prevailing poverty levels**. In villages closer to the city, there was some indication of the bride price now being further affected by the **level of education of girls**, particularly the completion of primary, and even secondary education. In some villages (Draib El Reigh), high dowry prices were reportedly putting boys off marriage, with many boys pursuing pre-marital relations instead.

Marriage practices: towards 'choice' with boys of similar age

There have been some significant shifts in marriage practices in the past 10-20 years, and particularly since the time of displacement, with **new dominant 'modern' trends towards 'freedom of choice' marriages, and 'increased options' for girls**. Such marriages are usually to boys of similar ages or young men in their early to mid 20s (or up to 10 years older). In such cases, the boy selects the girl, and if she agrees, he sends his family to her family to 'start the negotiation process'. Such 'choice' marriages are now becoming increasingly the norm for more educated girls in suburban and urban areas, and **fashionable**, with girls requesting their boyfriends to approach their father to start formal marriage proceedings.

Looking closer at marital systems, in South Darfur, **arranged marriages** were considered the norm 10-20 years ago, particularly in the rural areas, and were typical in over 50-75% of new marriages in the target communities. These types of marriages are still common today in the target village areas in an estimated **30-50% of new marriages**. Yet such arrangements are increasingly being viewed less favourably, in leading to 'unhappiness' and 'divorce' (Women's Group, Jimaiza Kamara, village, Kass). Yet indicating the persistence of more traditional values, in the Arab community visited in Kass, an older woman complained of a loss in parental control and now 'weaker' men. Arranged marriages are now indicated to be more common in villages further from the city. Similarly, in the IDP areas, arranged marriages were also deemed to be falling out fashion, now common only in **30-50% of new marriages (particularly in Arab families)**.

A **mixture of motivations** may lead parents to continue to pursue such marital arrangements. For example, arranged marriages are sometimes deliberately organized by parents (mothers) to curtail their daughter's (real or perceived) sexual relations and **fear of pre-marital pregnancy**, with a marriage to an older man. With **uncertain value for extensive schooling**, some parents deliberately remove girls from secondary level education 'as it takes too many years and too much time' (Midwife trainer from

⁷⁸ As in neighbouring countries, wealthier and more educated men (particularly diaspora, that by virtue of their residence in foreign countries are considered 'wealthy') may be socially obligated to pay higher dowry prices.

Department of Health, Nyala). The next expected social step is then marriage. Arranged marriage may be particularly popular with some families in the IDP camps with an **aversion to potential mixed-tribe marriages** by adolescents, although there can be much resistance from girls, with accounts of suicide and even violence towards husbands (Men's group, Al Salaam camp, Belil). In these traditional arranged marriages, the boy himself or the boy's parents may approach the girl's parents. Or the girl's father can initiate the marital process with interested families, particularly between cousins (with the priority on the father's side). Typically, such arranged marriages involve little consultation with the girls, with marriage proceedings taking place 'between family men' with the authority of local Imams (religious leaders). In these situations, marriages may often be organised with older 'rich' men, 'particularly where **poverty levels** are high'. In Tanakaro, Kass, girls recounted how such marriages used to be arranged when the girls were as young as 10-12 years, but the actual marriage would take place when she was more mature at 13-15 years old. However now, such arranged marriages would be typically at 15-16 years.

Polygamy and divorce: strongly linked

Polygamy is still very common and acceptable in all of the research areas, with most men having, on average two to three wives, depending on their 'life style and resources'. If men can afford it, this was seen to bring **status and labour benefits**: 'more wives can lead to more children, and thus more household help'. Likewise, older women may see younger wives to be domestic assistants, contributing to the household 'survival strategy'.⁷⁹ Yet CIS staff in Khartoum indicated that the situation was 'very different' to South Sudan, where 'rich men may take on up to 18-20 wives'. As elsewhere, in Darfur, polygamy is reported to often result in married women managing their daily households independently; with such as households described locally as 'female led'. In the target research areas, CIS staff indicated that there was still a perception that 'if you have only one wife, your status may be lower and you will be unable to participate equally in decision-making'. Amongst the new generation in the research villages, it appears that girls wed boys of similar ages without existing wives, although such boys may still take on second wives later. Where parents organize their marriages however, this may typically be to older men that are already married. At the Khartoum level, the Gender Centre for Research and Training emphasized that they considered this practice a 'violation' towards women, and that with education (Sudanese) women are less accepting of it.

Polygamy and divorce are strongly related in the research area, with divorce cited to often stem from conflict, and/or abandoned or neglected households. In the [target villages](#), divorce is indicated to be common (20-30%). Cases of women themselves **seeking divorce** were reported to **still be extremely rare**, as also reiterated by women's representatives from Nyala, although this appears to be starting to change. In Kass, adolescent girls reported divorce issues to be the main reason that women visit the courts (*see Section 3.2.1 (3)*). In the [IDP areas](#), there was more openness to this possibility with cases of local women seeking divorce through the courts and even remarrying. Yet often women may start such proceedings only to be pressured to drop the case, with the community forcing her to continue the marriage (women's group, Al Salaam camp).

Exploring new trends: from arranged to choice marriages

In general, it is evident that **both arranged and forced marriage are beginning to fall out of favour in local communities**, with the **new education of girls**⁸⁰, and the **growing**

⁷⁹ Interview with the Gender Centre for Research, Khartoum, 10th May 2018.

⁸⁰ In many locations, schools have been formalized with school construction and there has been a campaign for the participation of girls.

self-awareness of girls to choose their own husbands, with new trends permeating out of the urban areas. The Ministry of Welfare also highlighted the influence of media, including **TV and radio**, and the **mobile phone** (influencing the development of adolescent relations). Further to this, **war and displacement** has shifted ideas with exposure of rural communities to **city life as IDPs** and observation of city habits, and the new participation of girls in schools. From the perspective of adolescent girls, 'choice' marriage is reducing potential problems in marriage: 'its better now, we know each other' (Adolescent girls' group, Tanakaro, Kass). Likewise, almost unanimously outside of the IDP camps, women and men respondents viewed 'choice' marriage as more positive, with less cases of 'divorce' (by men). With the increasing self-determination of girls, there appeared to be **less hostile and aggressive attitudes in families towards pre-marital sex**. Whilst adolescent girls might have been killed for such acts in the past, now they are 'just beaten'. For **educated parents in the village**, as is now common in urban areas such as Nyala, there was additional interest in girls completing school before such 'choice' marriages. The association of 'arranged' marriage with divorce by respondents was now a common and **strong narrative** observed at the village level during the research. **Midwives** are also trained on early and adolescent marriage. In both the Arab community and the camps, adolescent girls reported even starting to raise awareness about the negative impacts of 'arranged marriage', trying to convince families not to pursue such marriages.

Such dialogue on both early and arranged marriage is **supported by NGOs** in the camps (such as CARE and IMC), although it was acknowledged that it would still need 'much time and effort' to effect change. UNFPA has focused a great deal of their strategy on tackling such social norms, particularly adolescent marriage and its link with early pregnancy, often through local NGO partners. The local Department of Welfare and Social Security indicated that these were also major topics of focus in their current campaign on 'A Women's Right to Life', with early marriage associated with (dangerous) premature pregnancies. However, NGOs such as Plan International indicated that such efforts and campaigns on early marriage were still **ultimately held back without clear legislation**. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security in Khartoum elaborated that discussions on legislation in early marriage were ongoing, but it is still a 'long and sensitive process' to incorporate new articles on early marriage into the law, with state level processes and revisions also critical. Further to this, there is **an absence of topics** such as harmful traditional practices, and early marriage **in school curricula** (much to the frustration of the local Department of Welfare in Nyala). UNICEF in Nyala indicated that efforts to tackle 'early marriage' were now being intensified in local campaigns targeting educational establishments such as schools and universities. Local CARE partners indicated community-level constraints with local 'closed' attitudes in more remote, smaller villages, by **less educated parents but also by local religious leaders** that endorse the role of the women in the house, and thus arguably, indirectly support traditional practices such as early marriage.

Drivers of teenage choice marriage: school drop out, and social expectations

At the village level, adolescents are both choosing their own husbands, and choosing to marry in their late teenage years. This has been attributed to the **increased 'agency' of the girls** through education and experience as IDPs. As in South Sudan, this **has influenced marital arrangements** and girls' **self-determination**. In further understanding choice-driven adolescent marriages, it is pertinent to consider the perspectives of girls themselves. Adolescent girls emphasized the increased social interaction of girls and boys at school (often co-ed schools in rural areas). **Girl-boy relations** are still socially unacceptable outside the institution of marriage (although not as taboo as in the past). Whilst changing 'choice' marriage practice may be viewed positively - with girls choosing both their time of marriage and partner - as teenagers, it can equally be seen as an **escape route from household poverty**. In choice marriages,

indicating more of a **social adolescent-led trend**, girls highlighted that it was now common for girls to finish primary school and start secondary education, but then drop out and consider marriage i.e. school dropout precipitates adolescent marriage (although the reverse also applies: early marriage and pregnancy can equally lead to marriage and school dropout). Linked to this, NGO staff highlight girls' **increased resistance to being obliged or forced to marry older men** (and thus taking their own marriage steps to prevent this). Meanwhile, if girls are academic, they will try to finish school, although economic resources may precipitate dropout. Boys are described to be able to continue their studies even whilst married but girls generally drop out, in part due to pregnancy and children. In cities such as Nyala, NGOs and local city dwellers indicate that there are increasing trends for girls to marry only after completing their secondary education and importantly, a **new marital 'value'** is being attached to this (i.e. minimum marriage age of 18 years, or after university at 21-25 years).

In the context of South Sudan, the research had emphasized the **social acceptability, and even strong endorsement of teenage marriage by parents** as 'their [adolescents'] choice') with some cases of aggressive defense (Ritchie, 2017). In South Darfur, attitudes appeared to be more relaxed with parents generally happy with girls marrying in their mid to late teenage years, although it was not such a declarative adolescent act. This was perhaps due to the fact that the boys are often in their early twenties (compared to teenagers in Jongeli and Eastern Equatoria in South Sudan). With religious conservatism, there may be fewer cases of much younger adolescent girls (14-15 year olds) engaged in (early) **pre-marital sex** and incidences of pregnancy, with cases arising typically at 15-17 years. Notably, at the village level in both research locations, there was **little discussion or recognition of the health risks** associated with teenage marriage, particularly in terms of adolescent pregnancy.

Box 3.3: Changing marriage attitudes and practices in South Darfur

"Before displacement, a girl could not talk or make choices. Now they can refuse [prospective husbands] and reject an arranged marriage" (Women's group, Jimaiza Kamara, Kass)

"Boys are being put off marriage with high market prices and high dowries" (Women's Group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

"Living in the camp is complicated...we mix together with other tribes and girls have relations outside of the tribe...the families are afraid and they use [arranged] marriage as a [forced] protection mechanism" (Women's Group, Al Salaam camp).

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in MARRIAGE PRACTICES

- Early marriage (under 14) is indicated to be now low (<5-10%).
- In rural areas, underage marriage (under 18) has increased, with average marriage age estimated to be around **16-19 years old** in Belil, and **15-18 years old** in Kass (an estimated 60-70% marriages), and from a broader spectrum of 12-25 years old previously. Arranged marriage (voluntary and forced) has also decreased to **30-50%** from over 50%.
- In IDP areas, underage marriage (under 18) has increased, with average marriage age estimated to be around **15-18 years old** (an estimated 60-70% marriages), from a broader spectrum of 12-25 years old previously. Arranged marriage (voluntary and forced) has also decreased to **30-50%** from over 50%.

3.2.1(3) Gender-based violence

In agro-pastoralist society, **strong patriarchal norms prevail**, with men expected to be the decision-makers and protectors, and women the homemakers and child carers, often in hostile and unpredictable living conditions. In such fragile contexts, life is harsh for men and women alike, with frequent violence in the home, community and beyond. The phenomenon of wife battery (a traditional practice used to discipline and control women) remains normal in such households, with rural women even defining their husband's 'care' through such practices (Ritchie, 2016). Agro-pastoralist women may also suffer sexual violence, psychological abuse, and denial of opportunity as part of every day life (Ritchie 2015,16, 17; CARE South Sudan 2016b). In the context of war and disruption, regional studies highlight the higher prevalence of such behaviour. For example, in 2009, a UNIFEM survey indicated that 41% of respondents (men and women) had experienced gender-based violence in South Sudan.⁸¹

In Sudan, gender relations amongst rural groups may be labeled as '**complex**', with differences across age groups, social class and rural-urban locales. With a patriarchal culture and low levels of education, gender-based violence has often been condoned in rural life in Sudan. Yet as highlighted by CIS (2013), displacement by conflict or natural disasters has added pressure to gender relations. With a loss of land and livestock, men have lost traditional status and power, contributing to violence against women as a means of maintaining or regaining control or releasing their frustration. Further, with decreasing access to natural resources such as wood (*as discussed in the next Section, 3.2.2*), this has exacerbated the risk of rape, assault and other forms of violence against women.

As common, women may be beaten by their husbands 'to teach them a lesson' in what is sometimes called 'wife correction' (Ritchie, 2017). In the case of intimacy, women may also be considered the property of their husbands, and thus men may demand sex from them at any time. During times of **instability and civil war**, gender norms can be exacerbated, or even break down with stress, frustration and disorder. As shown during the Darfur crisis (see Box 3.4), sexual violence by local gangs and militia may be perpetrated against women and children as well as men. During conflict or as IDPs, younger men may feel frustrated in being unable to feed and support the family with an increase in anti-social behaviour (including domestic violence, substance abuse and even criminal activities). Women may also be traded for food or used as sexual slaves (and forced into prostitution).

As described by CIS, sexual violence in Sudan became a global concern during the Darfur crisis, with reports also of increasing cases of domestic violence in conflict areas⁸². There were also such cases of violence arising in displacement contexts (e.g. camps) and during 'return and repatriation' (CIS, 2013). Gender violence included incidences of rape, abduction, sexual slavery, physical assault and forced marriages. The most commonly cited types of violence included sexual violence (43%) and domestic violence (42.9%).⁸³

⁸¹ UNIFEM Gender-based Violence and Violence Against Women: Report on Incidence and Prevalence in South Sudan (2009) cited in CIS (2013)

⁸² Women for Women International (2006). Beyond Darfur: War's Impact on Sudanese Women and Their Hopes for a Peaceful Future., cited in CIS (2013).

⁸³ E Rahma (2009). Reproductive Health KAP Survey among Communities Affected by Conflict in Darfur. UNFPA, Sudan Country Office cited in CIS (2013).

Box 3.4: Sexual violence in Darfur

'The issue of sexual violence in Sudan became a global concern during the Darfur conflict, and there were even reports of increasing domestic violence cases against women in conflict-affected communities.⁸⁴ Women and girls were particularly subject to rape when leaving their camps and going out to collect firewood and water.⁸⁵ In Darfur, according to the United Nations, "Girls have been targeted in inter-ethnic conflicts as a deliberate form of humiliation of a group, and as a means of ethnic cleansing."⁸⁶ Rape victims face difficulties in reporting their rape and seeking justice; not only because of the fear of becoming ostracized by their own communities⁸⁷, but because the criminal law could potentially be used to charge the victims with adultery instead of investigating the rape charge.⁸⁸' (CIS, 2013)

In looking towards the response to violence, and support of legislation and restorative justice, it is critical to review mechanisms that are currently in place at the community level and beyond to prevent or respond to SGBV. Sudan laws are closely aligned with Sharia law. Under Sudan's Muslim Personal Act of 1991, Article 52 states that women must obey their husbands⁸⁹. Yet as mentioned earlier, recent developments include the establishment of a *National Plan for Combating Gender-based Violence* in the Ministry of Justice (2005), and the establishment of a *Family & Child Protection Unit* in 2006 managed by the Ministry of Interior. A National Strategy for Elimination of Violence against Women has been drafted (2012), under the auspices of the Council of Ministers.⁹⁰ Yet Sudan is still to ratify the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Africa Protocol on Women's Rights and this is a controversial issue between civil society and government in Sudan. Meanwhile the 1991 law on rape known as 'Article 149', originally confused rape and adultery (*zina*)⁹¹ and was updated in 2015. Whilst the amendment expanded the definition of rape and separated it from *zina*, according to legal advisors, there still remained a problem of evidence (ibid).

Research Findings in South Darfur

Whilst only lightly investigated⁹², the research indicated that household and community violence persists; yet this lies at a more 'normalized' level, particularly in target villages 'with less problems than before', following years of conflict and instability. Wife battery continues at a household level. At a community level, 'normal levels' of gender violence are indicated to exist, although such incidents may flare up during times of 'economic hardship'. Outside of the community, violence may also be

Domestic violence persists although attitudes changing yet inflamed by conflict and seasonality

⁸⁴ Women for Women International (2006). Beyond Darfur: War's Impact on Sudanese Women and Their Hopes for a Peaceful Future cited in CIS (2013).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ The UN Secretary's General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict (2006). A/61/529 S/2006/826 cited in CIS (2013).

⁸⁷ O O Fayomi (2009), Women in conflictual situations in the war-torn Darfur, Sudan: An exposition, in Giuseppe Caforio (ed.) *Advances in Military Sociology: Essays in Honor of Charles C. Moskos* (Contributions to Conflict Management, Peace Economics and Development, Volume 12, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.173-181 cited in CIS (2013).

⁸⁸ L Tønnessen (2012). From impunity to prosecution? Sexual violence in Sudan beyond Darfur. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre cited in CIS (2013).

⁸⁹ Tønnessen and Roald (2007), p.22

⁹⁰ African Women's Rights Observatory. Country-specific Information: Sudan. <http://new.uneca.org/awro/CountrySpecificInformationSudan.aspx>

⁹¹ "If a rape victim failed to prove her case she could be punished for committing adultery (*zina*)" (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/walaa-salah/new-amendments-to-sudanese-criminal-law>).

⁹² Rather than explicitly discuss violence against women, this topic was more sensitively explored under the themes of 'household discipline' and community 'social' problems. As highlighted by Global Aid Hand in Khartoum, GBV is still a very taboo topic within the country because of its perceived link to religion.

perpetrated by neighbouring ethnic groups (e.g. Arab nomadic groups) in local conflicts over resources (particularly during the rainy season), or during opportunistic robbery.

Domestic violence and wife beating: attitudes slowly shifting

In [target villages](#), adolescent girls and women indicated that the beating of both women and girls (domestic violence) was still 'common', **with either a slight improvement or little reported change** since the time of displacement. As a reflection of its prevalence, over 50-60% reported as experiencing such behaviour at the household level in more city-linked and 'educated' communities such as Draib El Reigh. Yet as highlighted by women's representatives in Nyala, domestic abuse cases were now lower than during the conflict period, in part due to **increased awareness**, with higher numbers of men 'seeking divorce instead of domestic strife' (particularly men facing economic pressure). Women and girls indicated that the situation had now 'normalized' after years of instability. Domestic violence was also cited to have improved with **education**.

Typically, women may be beaten by their husbands for asking about money, arguing, requesting new clothes, being lazy with domestic duties, going out of the house without permission (including attending village celebrations), and refusing intimacy. Women are also expected to handover their salaries, such as those that work as teachers 'because you belong to him' (women's group, Geldy, Belil). In Jimaiza Kamara, women highlighted that if you find a women that is not 'disciplined' it is because her husband is away as a trader or working in the mines. Women attributed the beating to the culture of the village but also to the **lack of education of men** (Tanakaro, Kass). Meanwhile, adolescent girls reported that girls could be disciplined or beaten by their father, mother or (eldest) brothers as 'the main [family] decision makers' for not completing domestic work, extra marital sex and disobeying their orders, with beating still a 'traditional' and acceptable way of controlling the family. Notably, mothers have the authority to give girls permission for activities such as leaving the house. Girls may also face beatings by her uncle or male relatives, for social taboo issues such as extra marital sex or pregnancy. Yet girls in more educated 'city facing' communities such as [Draib El Reigh](#) described beating as having decreased, with girls **'knowing the law', an increased awareness of male family members** of the negative impact of such behaviour, and **with leaders now supporting women and girls**. The **exposure to non-village life** was argued to have changed village ideas and habits. Yet they mentioned there was still a need for more 'awareness raising' in the community, in particular with local leaders such as the sheiks and the Omda. Indicating the continued sensitivity of the topic⁹³, the responses from the men's groups were weak, short and superficial with either a denial of such phenomenon, or a suggestion that habits had radically changed. Men attributed change to education, exposure as IDPs, awareness of the Koran (Arab community) and 'foreign' messaging.

In the [IDP camp](#) however, there appeared to **more notable shifts in both attitudes and practices related to gender-based violence**. Compared to the village groups, there was significant difference in the **level of discussion** of wife beating with **more articulation and awareness amongst the women**, and even examples of activism, with women seeking justice. Women described such behaviour to still be 'common', although very **slowly changing with education and NGO training** (not mentioned in the target villages). This has also led to a **decrease in the social acceptability** and prevalence of wife beating. Adolescent girls reiterated that such behaviour was improving with



Domestic violence increasing during conflict but also during the rainy season

⁹³ In addition, the male focus group team struggled with this topic with a lack of experience of talking about such issues.

education, the **efforts of local committees** in the village and **interventions by NGOs** on raising awareness of the negative impact of ‘violence against women’. Adolescent girls felt that the beating of wives once or twice was ‘acceptable’ but it was not justified to engage in multiple beatings. Likewise, girls felt they still deserved to be beaten if they made mistakes. Indicating a **seasonal dimension**, women described such behavior as being inflamed during the rainy season, ‘when men drink and become drunk, playing cards. Women were still expected to ‘hand over their salaries’, and to ensure their husband’s permission before leaving the house but there was a sense of women’s own resistance to ‘beating’. Further some women were also threatened with violence or even divorce if they attended village celebrations without their husband’s permission. IDP women described men as needing ‘more training’ on this topic, with workshop messages now fading (reported as held in 2011-13).

Robbery, assault, and sexual violence: linked to insecurity and conflict

In the **target villages**, **incidents of rape were mostly linked to conflict** and ‘during times of crisis’ by nomadic Arab groups or military personnel. Target villages were now described to have ‘returned to peace’, even if there is localized seasonal insecurity (and risk). Such periodic insecurity was described as not common though before displacement. In **Kass**, **there appeared to be higher levels of insecurity in certain locations**, with women reporting the robbery of carts, donkeys and donkey ploughs. In the Arab village visited in Tanakaro, Sangetaa, such incidences were not reported: ‘security is good; we can even go out alone a night’ (women’s group). In cases of attack or violation, community representatives do seek police support. In general, **incidents of rape were reported as ‘uncommon’** in rural villages (or less reported). Yet as mentioned by CIS health staff, there is still ‘great stigma’ attached to such incidents and thus reporting is low.⁹⁴ At the village level, isolated occurrences were described to only take place in ‘**remote places**’ (e.g. when fetching firewood). In general however, daily journeys for example to primary schools were cited as being close by with no reported hassles on these trips. Yet it is clear that it is a **still highly taboo issue**, and difficult for girls and women to both discuss this, and report and seek justice.

In the **IDP camp** however, security was described to have deteriorated with women facing added risks collecting firewood (*as indicated in the next Section 3.2.2*), and farming. This was also affecting general mobility in the area, with particular dangers ‘if you move after dark’. Fueling a sense of insecurity, rumours were circulating on various localized incidences by outsiders, or trouble faced at the UNAMID camp by ‘unknown men’. Yet whilst respondents highlighted increased intimidation, beating or theft, adolescent girls reported that **incidences of actual rape were in fact rare**: ‘this happened before in 2007-8’. Meanwhile, the men mentioned that the last time such incidences arose (in numbers) as ‘during the tensions in 2013-14’.

Traditional and formal justice: shame outside of village

In terms of women seeking justice for incidents of **domestic abuse/GBV in the villages**, this is reported to be most commonly resolved by local traditional councils at the village level⁹⁵, with formal justice processes currently viewed as ‘rare’ and a ‘great shame’ for the village (women’s group, Draib El Reigh). This was reiterated by the adolescent girls. In some villages, formal court usage had in fact been previously sought, particularly during the aftermath of extreme violence but now the town-based courts were considered to

⁹⁴ Community Health Workers (CHWs) and midwives are obliged to report such incidences if they have knowledge of them, and women / girls must first be taken to a health facility before reporting to the local police post.

⁹⁵ This includes

'bring problems'. In Geldy, women described the seeking of formal justice to be 'forbidden' for women: 'you should stay home and take care of your children'. Courts were only pursued for (rare) cases of women seeking divorce. Whilst not specifically mentioned in the target research villages, Global Aid Hand (GAH) described setting up '**Women Centres**'⁹⁶ in villages in Belil (now handed over to the local Department of Social Affairs in Nyala), with social workers providing 'sensitization sessions' on FGM, GBV and early marriage; and legal advice if needed. GAH described GBV as still very 'taboo' due to the potential link with religion – instead GAH emphasise 'gender equality and rights'. Women in Kass emphasized that court justice was 'almost impossible...we leave it to Allah'. CIS staff indicated that there had been a recent case of an 18 year old that suffered domestic abuse and was granted a divorce in the formal courts.

In general for women's participation in formal justice, in the [target villages](#), whilst women and men were more opaque in their responses, adolescent girls in both groups in Kass elaborated that women were in fact visiting the court, **mostly for 'divorce' reasons**, and were often 'successful' – a departure from before when all problems were only resolved locally. Yet despite this, the usual practice in the target communities is to initially try to solve family disputes or complaints at a family level (majority). If unsuccessful, this would then be taken up at community level, or finally, if unresolved then taken to the formal courts. Yet CIS staff indicated that the pursuit of formal justice was still rare for marital issues, and may be as low as 1 in 500 cases. Likewise, women's civil society representatives described such **pursuit of justice as rare for village women** and equally highlighted that rural communities will in fact discourage women from seeking formal justice for cases such as divorce (by the women) due to the complications that this brings: 'if she requests a divorce, the dowry will need to be repaid'. For formal justice in the event of abuse/GBV (through the Women and Children Commission under Department of Justice), CIS staff highlighted that cases had in fact increased dramatically in the past 15 years, particularly amongst 'town people', but 'village people are now coming too'. In the [IDP camp](#), similarly there are great efforts to resolve marital and domestic abuse problems locally but failing that, cases may be taken to the police station at the camp (abuse cases), and then to the courts in Nyala (both cases). Women's civil society representatives indicated that **knowledge of legal recourse was higher in the IDP camps**, often due their close proximity to the city ('where they know their rights') in addition to **NGO trainings**.

Box 3.5: Slow change in gender-based violence

"In general, wives accept beatings by their husband if they don't listen to their husband's view or concerns. In some cases however, women now seek outside local mediation and visit the court to resolve these problems – although this is rare." (Adolescent group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

"In some cases, local traditional leaders solve the problems between men and women - with women expected to apologize to her husband for her behaviour" (Adolescent group, Tanakaro, Kass)

"Men are the main problems for us...they need more training on household issues [domestic abuse]" (Women's group, Al Salaam camp, site 1, Belil)

"[Domestic violence] is improving because of education and NGO workshops...Now women have more rights and a voice to raise" (Women's group, Al Salaam camp, site 2, Belil)

⁹⁶ Such centres require further attention and investigation for better understanding women's changing access to support and justice, and links to village-level institutions, in particular VSLAs and women's committees.

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in Domestic and Community Violence

- Wife battery continues at a household level often exacerbated by times of crises, alcohol consumption and seasonality; although education, and NGO awareness and training is reducing behaviour (and changing attitudes), particularly in IDP areas.
- Rape and sexual violence exists in target areas but is mostly indicated to be problematic during conflict and war, or very remote places.
- Women’s knowledge and use of access to formal justice is described as ‘rare’ outside IDP areas but may be improved by village Women’s Centres (Global Aid Hand).

3.2.2 Women’s domestic workloads

As in other parts of the Horn, Sudan pastoralist and agro-pastoralist society is highly patriarchal, with **strongly delineated roles and responsibilities for men, women, boys and girls**. In rural Sudan, men and women tend to jointly participate in land clearance and preparation, harvesting, transporting and marketing of cash crops, with women carrying out most of the planting and weeding (CIS, 2013). Women are also typically involved in post-harvest food processing activities such as grinding grain and processing and preserving vegetables, meats and fruits. They are also responsible for rearing small domestic animals, generating meat, milk and eggs. Women may also tend ‘jubraka’ (home vegetable gardens), providing families with diversified food products such as beans, okra and green vegetables, as well as fruit from indigenous trees for household consumption or sell. In addition, women may be involved in non-farm income generating activities in the informal sector. In addition to these livelihood-based activities, traditionally rural women and children (especially girls) are further responsible for **all domestic-related family chores**. This includes fetching water each day and collecting firewood. They are also in charge of washing clothes, household shopping, food preparation⁹⁷, childcare and collecting fodder. Figure 3.1 gives a typical breakdown of agro-pastoralist gender-related livelihood and domestic work responsibilities in East Africa.

In such contexts, men are considered the ‘protectors of family security, primary breadwinners and central decision-makers’ whilst women are deemed responsible for household management and ‘domestic’ tasks including childcare, and food production. Women tend to work longer hours than men due to their multiple roles in productive, reproductive and community activities.⁹⁸ In particular, Flintan (2007) highlighted the unequal distribution of household labour in pastoralist communities, with women responsible for the bulk of both domestic and productive work. Men may spend time searching for pasture and water, with women then taking the weight of domestic chores, including collecting water and firewood.

Figure 3.1: Typical agro-pastoralist gender roles/responsibilities in East Africa

Activity	Male			Female		
	Child	Adult	Elder	Child	Adult	Elder
PRODUCTIVE						
Herding	X	X		X		
Animal Health		X			X	
Animal Mobility	X	X				
Grass Collection				X	X	X
Preparing Milk					X	X
Churning Butter				X	X	X
Lifting up Animals	X	X	X	X	X	X
Slaughtering		X	X			
Managing Small Animals				X	X	
Livestock Marketing		X	X			
Land Preparation		X			X	
Land Clearing	X	X				
Harvesting		X			X	
Threshing	X	X	X	X	X	
Store Construction		X			X	
Charcoal Making	X	X			X	
Sowing		X				
Weeding	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guarding Crops	X	X	X	X	X	
Migration						
REPRODUCTIVE						
Food Preparation				X	X	
Fetching Water	X			X	X	
Fuelwood Collection	X			X	X	
Protecting Children				X	X	X
Washing Clothes				X	X	
House Construction					X	
House Cleaning				X	X	
Fencing Field		X			X	
Fencing Kraal		X	X			
Cleaning Kraal				X	X	X
COMMUNITY						
Veterinary Services		X	X		X	X
Collecting Mineral Salt		X	X			
Meetings		X	X			
Weddings	X	X	X	X	X	X
Funerals		X	X		X	X

Source: Aregu et al (2007: 39)

⁹⁷ In Sudan, this includes preparing food such as ‘kisra’ and making porridge (CIS 2013)

⁹⁸ Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), UNICEF Sudan (2016)

Yet with climate change, war and displacement, there have been increased pressures on rural households, often in fact diversifying women’s responsibilities (with additional economic roles), but shifting the management of domestic duties onto the oldest girl of the family, in the maintenance of the home, daily chores and child care. Despite this, there has been often little indication of boys’/men’s increasing participation in domestic tasks. In particular, a lack of water increases women’s vulnerability as women reduce their own water intake to reserve water for the family. It also affects women’s personal hygiene, exacerbating a negative impact on health.

In the war affected Darfur region of Sudan, the roles and responsibilities of family members may have adapted and evolved with prolonged stress, conflict and displacement, although many gender (domestic) norms may equally remain fairly stubborn, even under such pressures (CARE South Sudan, 2016b). Typically, local women and girls are engaged with food preparation and cooking, cleaning and childcare, collection of water and firewood, and farming. Men and boys tend to be involved in cattle herding, hunting, fishing and charcoal production. In more challenging times of drought, insecurity (with farming activities inhibited) and as IDPs, strict gender roles often constrain ‘sharing responsibilities in the household’, with both men and women viewing men’s roles to be primarily related to providing for the family monetarily (CARE South Sudan, 2016b). Women may thus continue to fulfill her domestic duties whilst men may engage in social interaction, and leisure activities (playing cards, drinking tea). The 2014 MIC survey indicates that 46.6% of the population of South Darfur has access to an improved water resource (typically from an elevated tank, or hand pump). Unimproved water resources include unprotected wells as well as unfiltered surface water and tanker-trucks in South Darfur.

Research Findings in South Darfur

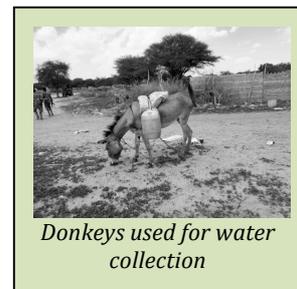
In target communities in Belil and Kass, women and girls were shown to **still be fully responsible for all domestic related chores**, including collecting **water each day** and **firewood**, in addition to washing clothes, household shopping, food preparation, farming and grinding grains. These activities thus still very much dominate women (and girls’) lives despite increasing context-related challenges, with **widows/FHHs** often facing the greatest burdens: to both support the household domestically and economically.

Access to water (improved)

As in South Sudan, the research suggested that the **availability and access to (quality) water has generally improved** in most of the target research villages as a result of the rehabilitation of water points by CIS and other NGOs in the past 15 years. CIS has taken the ongoing community management and sustainability of water resources very seriously with the establishment of water user committees⁹⁹ in many locations (under CIS’s WASH interventions¹⁰⁰).

On average, in the **target villages**, women and girls reported spending **0.5-1.5/2 hours collecting water each day** (including walking to water

Chores still heavy for predominately women (with support of girls) but access to water improved



Donkeys used for water collection



Local transport – where available carts are used for carrying firewood

⁹⁹ Typically 10 people, comprising at least 5 women.

¹⁰⁰ In addition to water point rehabilitation and management, CIS WASH activities include hygiene training, and the Community Led Total Sanitation (CTS) approach.

sources and back), improving from 2 plus hours a day.). A much cited changed since 2003, women and girls may now use **donkeys and carts**, where available. Water points included hand pumps in the target villages except Tanakaro. In addition to a hand pump, Jimaiza Kamara also has a 'mini water yard'.¹⁰¹ Water collection is considered foremost a woman's responsibility, alongside their daughters. There may be a seasonal dimension to access, with summer shortages and women and girls obliged to walk further to find water. Meanwhile in the rainy season, the water points can become congested with increased people farming (in Kass) and girls are forced to find water in 'the valley' (unimproved sources). In some communities (Jimaiza Kamara, Kass), men and boys have been involved in the collection of water (on bicycles), to sell to local households. In the [IDP areas](#), time collecting water was cited to be higher at **1-3 hours per day** – yet, this was reportedly due to the water yard currently not functioning, thus distorting the indicator. Water is also collected and sold by boys for the local market (reported as 5SDG per jerry can).

Access to firewood: worsening

In terms of access to firewood however, in all research villages, the situation was less positive, with increasing challenges sourcing wood, due to its decreasing availability, in vein with pastoralist research in neighbouring countries. Wood collection for the house remains an exclusively female activity, with the adult women of the house predominantly involved in this activity, and typically older daughters. Donkeys are used where available (again, this is a new 'habit' in the past 15 years) or women carry the wood on their heads. If women are sick or pregnant, her daughters are then expected to take over this activity or even female neighbours. In both the [target villages](#) and [IDP areas](#), women spent on average, **3-10 hours fetching firewood at least 2 to 3 times a week** (unchanged, or worse from previous times at the village level). In both research locations, access to firewood had worsened both due to the decreasing availability of wood, and **seasonal risk and insecurity during the farming season (increased dramatically in last 15-20 years)**. Schoolgirls may face particular challenges in carrying out chores, influencing the quality of their school life and success. Women reported collecting firewood mostly in the dry season and storing the wood on the homestead. In some cases, the village location had shifted due to the conflict, bringing villages closer together, in addition to expanding and absorbing IDPs, increasing pressure on local resources.

Looking closer at local insecurity, in [target villages](#), this appeared to be related to **seasonality, local tensions and decreasing availability of resources (firewood)**. In Belil (Draib El Reigh), adolescents elaborated that communities have in fact reported security incidences to local authorities but as yet no action has been taken. Recent insecurity was particularly highlighted in Kass with threats of robbery, rape and death by those 'on camels'¹⁰² (with donkeys and carts stolen¹⁰³). With insecurity, women also avoided straying too far from the villages. In all communities, adolescents elaborated that girls now go to collect firewood in groups (up to 30 girls in Kass together), and leave early in the morning to return by early afternoon (or return the next day). The **men's cutting and collection of firewood to sell and local deforestation** (to make charcoal) was blamed for the decreasing availability of wood. This was reported by several of the women's groups to be a 'major problem', with a urgent need now to find 'an alternative income' for men'. Yet in some cases, men's involvement in firewood collection has alleviated a little of women's burden to collect firewood. In the [IDP camp](#), collecting firewood can often be so dangerous that they have in fact resorted to **purchasing charcoal**, and often this expense falls on the women (reported as 230 SDG per gunny bag).

¹⁰¹ This is a deeper borehole with a mechanized pump system, either with solar or generator.

¹⁰² Typically the Arab nomadic groups.

¹⁰³ Notably women and girls leave their mobile phones at home.

Use of improved cook stoves: only in IDP areas

In the [target villages](#), whilst women had heard of the improved stoves, **usage was described as low** due to a **lack of awareness on such stoves**, a **lack of knowledge/skills** (on production), and a **lack of access** (with transport an additional cost). CIS staff indicated that there had been a great deal of attention to improved stoves in the past but there was less focus on 'such projects' at present. Meanwhile, in the [IDP camp](#), knowledge of the improved cook stove was much higher (notably, the mud version) and **usage was reported as 'common'** but women bemoaned its **lack of sustainability** and resilience in the rainy season. Adolescent girls elaborated that workshops had been held by NGOs to support the production of the improved mud cook stoves and people were happy with the reduced fuel required for cooking. Women now make these stoves in the camp and sell them at the community market. Women voiced interest in other varieties of improved stoves but cited that they had not received training on these and understood them to be expensive. Women civil society representatives working in Kass and Belil elaborated that WFP and NGO partners had in fact trained a great deal of women on improved cook stoves (particularly the 'mud' version) – although arguably, the focus of such efforts was predominantly in the IDP areas. They highlighted that the production cost was low and that fuel was saved (and hence saving women's time on wood collection) but that ultimately the stoves were not durable. They stressed that the profits from the sales of the mud stoves were also too low for significant income generation. They recommended further attention to the cement version that is more expensive but 'resilient with good heat'.

Pressures and effects of workloads: role of men and insecurity

On the face of it, the collection of water and wood appear to remain the key responsibility of women 'as the work of the women of the house'. Yet there appears to be some relief in the intensity of work with improved access to water, the use of carts and donkeys and men's involvement (for market sell, but sometimes they can supply the household). Such support will be hidden to avoid possible abuse from other men and a loss in recognition or status, and the label of '**unmanly**' for **participating in domestic chores**. For young men, this could even lead to decreasing marriage prospects (with a loss of interest by village girls). CIS partner NGOs likewise reiterated this, with (obvious) engagement in such work affecting men's status. They highlighted that men's support to such chores was less visible in towns such as Nyala, thus allowing men to (secretly) help out.

However, it is clear that (seasonal) **insecurity has greatly increased**, with risks of violence and attacks, adding extra pressure to women's collection of water and wood. And whilst not fully investigated, **FHHs** – an increasing phenomenon with conflict, displacement and divorce - may face greater challenges in both completing chores and looking after children, with children often left to fend for themselves with **increased food insecurity in such households** as indicated in South Sudan, particularly during the dry season (Sharp, 2017). The weight of domestic chores may also influence **girls' ability to do homework** with 'expectations to carry out domestic chores' once home.

Box 3.6: Trends in weight and responsibilities of domestic chores

"We face insecurity in collecting water and firewood, and feel exposed to robbery and violence in these journeys" (Adolescent group, Jimaiza Kamara , Kass)

"All the forests have become 'dry'...Now, near our villages, there are no trees to cut" (Women's group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

"Men cut and sell the firewood, and local brick makers use it for fuel" (Women's Group, Tanakaro, Kass)

"Men can't help [in domestic-related] chores as this work belongs to women...If he loved his wife, he might help her but he should be responsible for finding daily work" (Women's group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

"The collection of firewood and water belongs to women...Men are threatened [outside of the community, by other tribes] if they go out" (Men's group, Al Salaam, Belil)

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in FEMALE DOMESTIC CHORES

- In villages, the general scope of women's domestic chores remains unchanged, but there is a mixed picture in terms of the weight of work (with improved access to water), and some participation of men. There is also an increased use of **carts and donkeys**. In IDP areas, women's domestic chores are often improved, with the provision of local water points. In all locations, access to firewood was deteriorating, with deforestation, increasing populations, men's collection for the market, and **seasonal risk and insecurity during the farming months**. FHHs may face particular challenges in carrying out chores; and schoolgirls may be adversely affected, influencing the quality of their school life.
- In the rural areas, time spent **collecting water** has improved to **0.5-1.5/2 hours collecting water each day**, from 2+ hours/day previously. Time spent **collecting firewood** included **3-10 hours (over) two-three times a week** – described as unchanged or worsening. **Usage of improved cook stoves was limited**.
- In the IDP areas, time spent collecting water was cited at **1-3 hour daily** (yet facilities were currently not functioning, thus distorting normal indicators). Time spent collecting firewood may also extend to **3-10 hours (over) two-three times a week** – but the **purchasing of charcoal** was also cited. **Usage of improved (mud) cook stoves was common (fuel-saving)**.

3.2.3 Women's access to/control over assets (and productive resources)

In most East African agro-pastoralist societies, women and girls do not have the rights to own or inherit household resources and assets under customary law (CARE Ethiopia, 2009). This relates primarily to livestock as the main family assets, but also increasingly to land in agro-pastoralist communities. In particular, pastoralist men may have family resources that are allocated to them, and accessible on marriage, and other assets that may be negotiable. For example in terms of wedding gifts, for pastoralist boys in Ethiopia, these may include 'four cows, four lambs and four goats' (from his family). Wedding gifts to the girls however may include only 'a stick, a comb, one goat and cattle' from her family (Ritchie, 2015).

Traditionally, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist women do not also own or control the main household money. Whilst women

Box 3.7: Dominance of customary law in East Africa

'Customary laws or traditions have an unflinching and unrivalled influence over written law in many African nations, to the extent that they contradict written law and sometimes override it with the complicity of society members who stick to them out of fear'.

Source: ACPF (2015)

may be seen as managers of the household, they are in charge of subsistence spending only. As highlighted in South Sudan, men control 'larger sums of money on matters outside of the household' (CARE South Sudan, 2016b). Any limited income made by women from the sale of low value resources is also channeled directly into the household, with women thus constrained from strategic capital accumulation (ibid.). This has made women economically dependent on their husbands (with the major family assets under his control). In the event of the death of her husband, all livestock and assets are expected to remain in the husband's family, with the wife expected to remarry the brother or male relative of her husband as a 'protector' and to essentially ensure that the assets remain in the family (sometimes called 'wife inheritance'). In Islamic contexts however, there have been shifts towards Islamic inheritance practices, where women receive a specified portion of her husband's wealth.

In some pastoralist/agro-pastoralist communities in the region (Ritchie, 2015-2017), women's access to resources is now slowly changing. In particular, women are more involved in cash management and control in the household, with engagement in VSLAs and increasing petty trading. Women described a newfound financial freedom through their own savings, income and disposable cash bringing new support to the household, and new independence and empowerment for women. Yet it is worth highlighting that in times of stress and conflict such new livelihoods and opportunities for women's independent resources can be threatened. A study by CARE (2016) in Eastern Equatoria in South Sudan indicated the increased harassment of women in small business activities by local men, and sometimes a refusal to pay for goods/services.

Similarly, in Sudan, traditionally, rural women did not usually own individual 'capital' assets. Material assets such as land, goods, animals, crops and money were thus largely controlled and managed by men. Women may be responsible for small ruminants such as sheep, goats and chickens, but she may need to consult him on their sale. As in other pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies in East Africa, women may also manage and control the production, distribution and disposal of livestock products such as milk in the household (Gebreyes et al., 2016). Women may be permitted to 'use land, goods, animals, crops and money', but the 'sale and purchase decisions are reserved for men' (CIS, 2013). Traditionally, women's and girl's work beyond the agricultural sector was not deemed 'culturally acceptable' as women were considered 'subordinate and inherently incapable' (ibid). As highlighted by a young male respondent in CARE's earlier field research in Kass (CIS, 2013), 'the women herself is the property of the man'. Reflecting such limits and cultural barriers, considering women's 'economic opportunity', the Economist Intelligence Unit placed Sudan last out of 128 countries worldwide in 2012. In general, CIS emphasised women's **poor access to and control over agricultural resources and services** such as land, credit, agricultural inputs, for example seeds and fertilizer and limited access to extension services. Women's business activities in Sudan are equally constrained by such gender inequalities, and poor access to services/resources in addition to 'their responsibility for subsistence expenditure, limited mobility and women's double time-burden due to unpaid domestic work, and limited access to profitable markets' (CIS, 2013).

In the complex conflict-stricken context of Darfur, there have been major shocks to assets and livelihoods over the 'crisis' time, with the 'systematic' stripping of assets, as well as 'production failures, market failures, failures of access to natural resources and constraints on the remittances of migrant workers' (CIS, 2013). Yet in recent years in South Darfur, livelihoods for women are reported to have been invigorated by their increased participation in markets (CIS, 2013). With this, there are 'emerging perceptions amongst traders in markets that women are stronger negotiators and trading partners' (ibid). With prevailing norms however, the majority of women's access to markets still takes place through a male guardian (ibid.). On the one hand, with economic participation,

women are reported to gain new respect and admiration from their community in being able to improve their own household situation, offer loans to family and friends and support community social functions. But on the other hand, such women may also face abuse, and be labeled 'masculine', accused of loose behaviour and be forced into marriage for their wealth (ibid).

From a legal perspective, in Sudan, civil and Islamic (*Sharia*) Law does not actually prevent women from owning assets such as land, yet in practice men enjoy 'preferential rights over access to land' (CIS 2013). Land ownership amongst women is uncommon, with a resulting lack collateral for credit, membership in cooperatives and access to extension and production technology (ibid). Most subsistence farmers in Sudan do not own land but operate under the system of customary land tenure, with land use coordinated by community leaders, who provide farmers with usufruct rights.¹⁰⁴ Where women do own private land, the title of the deeds is often transferred to male members of the household particularly if she inherits, with adult males responsible for the extended family including unmarried and divorced female siblings. Yet as highlighted by CIS (2013), some female-headed households may still be able to secure control of land.¹⁰⁵ In the case of government-owned land, this may be leased to both male and female farmers, although the latter often lack resources to do this.¹⁰⁶

Research Findings in South Darfur

Limited change in women's access/control of traditional assets

In the target regions, the research drew attention to **very limited shifts in women's resource ownership and control**. Typical household farming land in the **target villages** ranged from **3.75-5 fedans (3-4 makhamas) per household**, and **0-2 cattle with 3-6 smaller ruminants** (goats, sheep and chickens). Respondents indicated a significant depletion of livestock assets, and shifts towards farming and non-farm livelihoods. In Jimaiza Kamara, Kass, villagers reported owning no large livestock (and if you purchase a cow for a family/community celebration, 'to kill it quickly before it is stolen!'). Meanwhile in the Arab community, Tanakaro, families were reported to have higher levels of livestock (up to 3 cattle plus several smaller ruminants). In the **IDP area**, households may rent **3.75-5 fedans for cultivating sorghum, groundnuts and vegetables**, although security remains a significant problem. Few households owned livestock except donkeys (they purchase 'second hand' donkeys, or older, more worn out animals to avoid theft).

Control and management of large assets: little change

Assets such as livestock and land are still primarily owned and controlled by the men although there appeared to be very slight shifts towards women's management of the land for family farming. Men tend to manage larger livestock if available (cattle), with women managing minor assets (e.g. smaller ruminants and household animals such as donkeys, goats and chickens). In general in the target villages, men would need to be consulted on the sell of all major household animals.¹⁰⁷ If the husband is away, women in Jimaiza Kamara, Kass described having to seek permission from her neighbour's husband! Money for the livestock once sold



Large assets, where available are still controlled by men

¹⁰⁴ Government of Sudan, Sudan Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, September 2011, DRAFT No5, February 7, 2012 cited in CIS (2013).

¹⁰⁵ The World Bank (June 24, 2011) *Mainstreaming Gender in Microfinance in Sudan*, cited in CIS (2013).

¹⁰⁶ FAO, Women, Agriculture and Rural Development. Fact Sheet: Sudan. 1/9/2012. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/V9105E/V9105E00.htm> cited in CIS (2013).

¹⁰⁷ The exception to this rule would be the wife's own livestock that she might have received on marriage (belonging to her).

belongs to the man. Women were only permitted to sell chickens autonomously.

In terms of land, most of the family plots are community owned land but individual households may have an allocation, as agreed with village authorities. Land tends to be co-managed by men and women, although men still perceive it to belong to them. In the [target villages](#), families were cultivating sorghum, groundnuts, and millet, okra (mainly) in addition to sesame, watermelon and vegetables (e.g. tomatoes and onions).¹⁰⁸ For the main crops, men may make the 'big decisions' on what to grow and when, and the allocated plot size. In Geldy, Belil some women described renting additional land themselves (e.g. 300 SDG for 1.25 *fedan* for a year¹⁰⁹). They were permitted to lease on credit, and repay after the harvest. In Kass, it may be in fact common for Fur households to rent the land (particularly in areas nearer the city). In the [IDP camp](#), some women reported working as farmers (perhaps 30%), with women renting land from local landowners, in some cases without the knowledge of their husbands. Yet whilst women both in and out of the camps, were increasingly active in household farming, CIS staff elaborated that Fur women in particular are still often 'like workers for their husbands...labouring in the fields, with the harvest belonging to the man'. But as discussed with local staff, **women's increasing participation on the farm may also bring about shifts in power between men and women, with greater co-management (or women's own management) of household agricultural production and cultivation strategies.**

Cash management, and petty trading: attitudes shifting

In terms of cash management, there has been **little practical change in habits in recent times**. Whilst women may keep money 'safe', the husband may oversee the main household budget, with women 'managing smaller household expenses', including the 'day-to-day' budget for food shopping. For larger expenses such as clothes and shoes, and school fees, the women will need to seek permission from her husband. In more impoverished communities such as Jimaiza Kamara in Kass, women described managing all of the money as 'it was so little, it didn't matter'. **FHHs have more control** of daily income, but may still be overseen by the husband's male relatives (in terms of sell of major assets).¹¹⁰ Notably, women and girls may also be involved in the foraging of wild fruit (e.g. *altabdi, nabag, aradib*) for the household and for the market, **with money earned belonging to the women and girls**. Yet if women earn formal salaries (for example as a teacher), they are expected to hand this over to their husbands. With high rates of polygamy and absent husbands (*as indicated in Section 3.2.1(2)*), an estimated **50-70% of all households were described to be women-led (including those where the husband was away working), with women responsible for daily life in the household** and cash management.

VSLAs: precipitating socio-economic change for women

With recent war and displacement in South Darfur, many women may be slowly gaining more control and management of the household income. Yet Village Savings and Lendings Associations (VSLAs) may also precipitate change. In research communities, new VSLA groups had also been established but activities remained in their early stages, with little reported impact on savings and petty trading. Interestingly in the context of Darfur, a very similar cultural savings group exists known as the '*sanduk*'. The VSLA thus rests upon women's traditional habits of collective savings, permitting greater traction for these emerging groups. Since 2012, in South Darfur, through its partners, CIS has in fact

¹⁰⁸ The main farming season runs from June to November.

¹⁰⁹ Yet the women indicated that the price may be more expensive if you plant sorghum or millet, than for example groundnuts.

¹¹⁰ The nature of household control by FHHs needs further exploration, particularly the women's ability to sell assets.

established over 400 VSLAs in Kass, and 50 VSLAs in Belil. In a number of VSLAs in Kass, CIS integrates REFLECT methodology for literacy learning into the approach, and several have been trained in vocational skills (e.g. shoe making, perfume making, food processing and tailoring and design¹¹¹). As highlighted by Forceir Consulting in their evaluation of CIS SEED project (2017), CIS has combined technical skills training with soft business skills training. Some individuals have also been linked with start-up capital. A few women¹¹² were also trained on innovative technologies such as the production of 'green' charcoal (the usage of organic waste to make 'charcoal' for fuel). Forcier Consulting (2017) had indicated the need to **strengthen the link between the VSLAs and the skills trainings** to better support the employment/entrepreneurship chain. In addition, VSLA members were reported to sometimes use the loans for purchasing 'non-business assets', for example household furniture rather than investing in productive ventures.

CIS technical staff in Kass elaborated on their successful VSLA activities in communities such as Sangetaa, neighbouring the target research village of Tanakaro, boasting a total of 30 VSLAs. Notably, this is the highest number of VSLAs reportedly established in one community across the region for this research (Ritchie 2015-2017). Whilst CIS partners established several VSLAs, the local proliferation of VSLAs was described as common by CIS Khartoum staff. CIS staff elaborated on the achievements and socio-economic impacts of VSLAs in this community. At a household level, women have been able to increase their incomes, and support their families in **purchasing food, clothes and medicine**, and **paying children's school fees**. Women have also been able to use their savings to **invest money in agriculture** (for example, renting land to expand their crop production), and initiate petty trading activities (particularly common¹¹³). The latter may include trading in the village in vegetables, tea, sugar and even goats. At a community level, many participating women now feel **confident to talk in front of men**, and participate in community bodies. Beyond this, the VSLA has forged a platform for women to discuss and engage in broader community issues related to public health and nutrition. In Sangetaa, VSLA women had formed a special women's committee to support community cleaning.

CIS technical staff described VSLAs as acting like a **'school' for women**, in particular older women that had not had the chance to attend school. Local civil society women's representatives in Nyala with several years of experience in Kass were equally positive about the impact of VSLAs, describing the structures as a much stronger and effective system than the traditional '*sanduk*'.¹¹⁴ They elaborated that 'even in 6 months, VSLAs can bring about change in women's economic situations' in addition to forging new important social connections. Yet, the Department for Social Affairs in Nyala emphasized that whilst VSLAs have indeed been pivotal in bringing women together, **trading activities remain 'small business'** as 'men cannot allow women to engage in large trading (e.g. household items or clothes)'. Beyond the village, trading on the whole is still viewed as a primarily male activity in both rural and urban areas in South Darfur.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Other activities include training on handicrafts and household items, for example the use of palm leaves to make mats to sell in towns and urban areas. (Department of Social Affairs, Nyala).

¹¹² As a trial, 13 women from different groups were trained in this methodology in 2015. Now a total of 31 women have 'green' charcoal businesses.

¹¹³ One of CIS's partners, Global Aid Hand elaborated that 75% of women in VSLAs engaged in some form of trading activities (Interview with Global Aid Hand staff, Nyala, 15 July)

¹¹⁴ In addition, such traditional savings groups were traditionally used for 'home improvement' not for business (Interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July 2018).

¹¹⁵ Interestingly, whilst Nyala has been described as more progressive than Khartoum, with women visibly trading in the market (particularly in the so-called 'Divorced Women market' area), local women leaders felt that there was still a lack of respect for this activity and stigma attached to it. Equally there was a lack of reported support and protection by the government – with pressure for women traders to move out of this commercial area.

Despite the general positive impact of the VSLAs, as yet, the VSLA model has not yet been extended to the target research IDP camp, Al Salaam (or other IDP camps such as KALMA, near to Nyala) by CIS/partners or other NGOs, with a predominant focus on extending humanitarian interventions such as WATSAN, protection, school support and health-related activities. Across the region as indicated by this research (Ritchie 2015-2017), whilst varied in their capacity, **VSLAs have been instrumental** in developing women's financial skills, permitting new economic activities and allowing women to directly support the household. Described as a major driver of change in households, **VSLAs are increasing women's capacity to be responsible for their families, leading to a redistribution of gender roles and power, with liberalizing effects for women.** In moving towards increased female self-sufficiency, the engagement of women in trading in particular has been a growing trend in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities (See *Appendix 6 for a background on VSLAs*).

Inheritance rights and 'wife' inheritance: little change

Both men's and women's groups indicated that since displacement **not much had changed in terms of women's inheritance rights.** In the *target villages* and *IDP sites*, communities reported following 'fairer' Islamic systems in over **80% of inheritance cases**, with less than 20% cases now depending on traditional customary law (i.e. with major assets (livestock and land) inherited by male relatives). CIS staff reported similarly: with an estimated 70% of rural inheritance cases now settled using Islamic methods, with just 30% practicing traditional systems. The use of customary systems may be more common in remote areas. **Islamic practices have been encouraged by the government**, and promoted by local Imams. Under traditional customs, women do not inherit assets directly as daughters or wives, and widows are still (mostly) obliged to remarry one of her husband's male relatives particularly if they are young ('wife inheritance'). Such practices reinforce the notion that women are the property of men. Under Islamic law, women receive a proportion of her husband's assets (usually half that to male relatives), and this is usually calculated and guided by local sheiks. Unmarried and married women may also inherit from their parents.

For practices such as '**wife inheritance**', indicating nuances from the research, for women who are over **40-45 years of age**, and particularly those that are beyond childbearing age, widows may now have more choice to remain alone with their children if they wish. Yet if they are younger and have no sons (older than 12 years old), widows may face pressure to marry the husband's brother or relative (particularly in Arab communities). In some cases, women may even remarry out of the husband's family, but children over the age of 8 and all assets may be expected to remain with the husband's family. In the *target villages*, current estimates suggest that 'wife inheritance' may be still more than **50% for those under 40 years in research locations (but only if she agrees)**, but may have fallen to **10% for over 40-45 year olds** (from over 50% previously). Whilst women over 40 are considered 'mature' and may stay with their husband's assets, for women younger than 40, the traditional authorities may typically advise her to remarry one of husband's male relatives. In the *IDP camp*, similar figures were cited with up to **25% of widows in general across all ages expected to remarry** a husband's relative (from perhaps 30-50%). Up to 50% of younger widows may be encouraged to remarry a male relative from her husband's family (but only with her consent), and as in the village, **10% for over 40-45 year olds.** Yet **attitudes were fast changing** and sentiments expressed appeared stronger than at the village level, with women in one site, describing this as a 'very bad practice' and men from the same area describing it as a 'past' practice. Certain tribes (e.g. Arab) in the camp were described to particularly maintain this tradition.

Meanwhile, adding to justice discussions in Section 3.2.1, the **pursuit of formal justice by women for property-related disputes** in the case of death or divorce is **still**

uncommon, with limited knowledge of their rights and formal justice procedures. Yet CIS staff indicated that in the event of death, with complicated assets and debt, the formal city court may need to be involved (family court), particularly if the traditional village justice system (*'mahkama-ahlia'*) is unable to resolve the matter ('they will refer the case upwards'). In the case of divorce, women in both villages in Kass elaborated that the husband may take all of the household assets 'even your clothes and underwear', forcing the wife to move back in with her parents. As in South Sudan (ACPF, 2015), women may have 'lower bargaining power' than men in traditional village-level proceedings and negotiations, with such sessions controlled and attended by men, and outcomes geared towards 'social cohesion and compromise' over the property rights of widows and their children. As indicated earlier, CIS staff reported that there were now cases of women seeking divorce, particularly if the husband had 'abandoned' them. The Department of Social Welfare indicated that there are in fact a few cases of rural women seeking justice for divorce, but this is still limited: *"We need to raise awareness of formal justice processes with both women and men"*. Indicating perhaps an increase in government support for women's justice, during the research however, a public notice was reported to have been observed in the local Nyala papers by the Ministry of Justice announcing that women were legally able to apply for divorce in the event of 'absentee' husbands (CIS staff).

Box 3.8: Resource dynamics and perceptions on inheritance

"The father of the house controls the resources (land and livestock) but women help in the management. The main budget of the house is also managed by men" (Men's group, Draib El Reigh, Belil).

"Women need the permission of their husband's to sell livestock. You can only choose to sell your chickens [autonomously]" (Women's group, Tanakaro, Belil).

"Women under 40 may be pressurized into remarrying her husband's relatives but only if she wants. For women, over 40 or 45 years of age, she is not obliged to marry again" (Women's group, Geldy, Belil).

"We are not practicing wife inheritance here, although it was very common before in our villages ...It is difficult for women to live with a husband that she didn't choose" (Men's group, Al Salaam, Belil).

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in ACCESS/CONTROL OF RESOURCES

- Women's practical control/access to traditional resources such as livestock (limited), land and cash has seen minimum change, except in FHHs or those in VSLAs. Yet attitudes around women's roles and entitlements (e.g. Islamic inheritance, **now 80%**) are starting to change with education, religious guidance and exposure as IDPs.
- Inheritance follows the Islamic system in **70-80% of cases**.
- In the rural villages and IDP areas, current estimates suggest that 'wife inheritance' may be still more than **50% for those under 40 years old in research locations (but only if she agrees)**, but may have fallen to **10% for over 40-45 year olds**. **Attitudes may be particularly changing in IDPs areas**, although practice still **high in Arab groups**.
- (In villages) VSLAs are precipitating change in women's access to income, resources (renting of land) and participation in small business (particularly notable in Kass).
- With high rates of polygamy and absent husbands, an estimated **50-70% of all households may be women-led**, with women responsible for daily life in the household and basic cash management

3.2.4 Women's participation in decision-making / gender relations

Looking closer at gender dynamics, in rural pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies in East Africa, women and girls are traditionally viewed as 'secondary' to men and boys, with implications for household/ community roles, responsibilities and entitlements, and gender relations and status. Starting from birth, pastoralist boys are more valued than girls. Crudely speaking, the girl child may only be valued for her eventual bride price. Girls may thus not be recognized much in their early years in their families, but then she is suddenly temporarily 'valued' at the time of her marriage for the income and prestige that this brings to her parents and family (i.e. not valued for herself but what she can bring). In some pastoralist societies, boy children may be celebrated with gunfire and ululating at birth, and subsequent celebrations are held at his ritual circumcision (at around 10-14 years old). In contrast, celebrations for girl children are subdued, if they take place at all. Later in life however, women may again be re-valued as 'wise' women, particularly older widows. These perspectives and life stages are translated into family roles, responsibilities and social positions, shaping gender relations within and outside of the home. With her (mostly) secondary status, girls and women are thus de-prioritized in terms of food distribution and in general household entitlements. Girls remain closest to their mothers, and are obliged to give respect to their father and brothers. Girls may be particularly controlled by her **brothers**, who can act as 'moral gatekeepers' ensuring that she does not offend the family's honour (through relations with boys and in general social conduct).

With their **secondary status**, rural women and girls are not traditionally included in household decision-making, and community meetings and gatherings. Yet research in Ethiopia indicates that women may draw instead on "informal' sources of power' (CARE Ethiopia 2011). This can be through their husbands, or through fostering a community reputation as a 'strong or wise women' (ibid). However such a voice may have a limited sphere of influence, within the family or clan. Indicating women's own collective strength, agro-pastoralist women may also collaborate to support each other as needed, for example women that are sick, or pregnant, in providing labour for firewood and water, and organizing the distribution of milk. Such activities often happen when men are absent. Indications of changing gender relations are growing across the region however, particularly as more rural girls attend school, and women's livelihoods evolve (Ritchie 2015-2017). In Ethiopia, Kenya and Somaliland, pastoralist/agro-pastoralist girls emphasized the '**critical importance of education** in particular in terms of enabling more influence of girls in their family (household decision-making), and facilitating greater life choices, including in marriage.

As in the East Africa region, women in Sudan are often excluded from public decision-making and conflict resolution processes. And at traditional conflict resolution processes, women are still rarely represented or allowed to participate (CIS 2013). Women are described to have a 'very low status' in both the public as well as private domain (Gachago et al., 2003). In West Sudan however, **traditional women leaders** may have some leverage. These include the village **hakamat** (literally 'judging' - see Box inset), and **sheikat**, or women of high status (e.g. daughters of Sultans, well-educated women). Particularly well-known in Darfur, exceptional women such as the **hakamat** may be involved in citing conflicts on some

Box 3.9: The Role of the Hakamat in western Sudan

"Women in all parts of Sudan are also known for using their poetry to direct action, behaviour and even fashion. Men fear the force of poetry in influencing people and in damaging reputations... Such women [are] recognized in western Sudan as 'Hakamat'. Those women execute a leadership role as well as inciting war and encouraging tribesman to avenge and keep the honour of a tribe, or in a few cases encouraging peace-building and forgiveness..."
Source: Badri, B. (2008)

occasions, and equally advocating for peace on other occasions.¹¹⁶ Indicating a more gender-balanced past, the Fur Sultanate (predominantly in Darfur) even had a women's council comprised of 'sisters and wives of the Sultan and his main chiefs' (Badri 2008).

At present, rural as well as urban women in Sudan tend to still have a 'minor role' in both community decision-making, as well as in the greater realm of political participation and civil service, thus 'limiting their ability to have a say in decisions that affect their lives' (CIS 2013). Indicating a **hierarchy of 'clout'**, CIS (2013) drew attention to a study¹¹⁷ in the rural areas of Greater Kordofan that revealed that rural farmers' voices were prioritized in community meetings, and this was followed by pastoralists and nomads, and then finally women, in those that are able to influence local decision making by governmental authorities. Family men also dominate decision-making at the household level (i.e. father, husbands and brothers), particularly those decisions related to assets, and major sales and purchases, as indicated earlier. CIS (2013) indicated that women often view their consultation in family decisions 'as either tokenistic or instrumentalist; to derive money, favours or buy-in'. Yet when men are absent men, women or older boys (17 years plus) may make the household decisions (ibid.).

There are a number of laws and policies that support women's participation in public life and development (CIS, 2018). This includes the *National Women Empowerment Policy* (2007) under the Ministry of Social Welfare (Women & Child Affairs), with a strategic objective: to empower women, integrate them and deepen their participation in all aspects of sustainable development. Secondly, the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of 1325* (Women, Peace & Security) aims to ensure women proportional and meaningful participation at all levels of conflict transformation and peace-building processes. Meanwhile, in steps towards women's political empowerment, the *Law on National Elections* (2008) stipulates that women have equal rights to men. This includes a quota system of a minimum of **25% of places for women** in political decision-making. This was amended to **30% in 2014**.

Nonetheless, even as rural women's lives change in a greater context of rights (and legal frameworks), and with the emergence of non-traditional livelihoods (e.g. petty trading) customary systems of decision-making have often remained **stubbornly non-inclusive** for women limiting women's capacity to participate in traditional community forums, and restricting women's access to services and resources (Ritchie, 2015-2017). Whilst it may be challenging to immediately change the gender composition of traditional meetings, Flintan (2007b: 30) cites Muir (2007) that instead advocates **opening up 'other spaces'** for women's participation and inclusion (e.g. new community structures and bodies).

Box 3.10: CIS Governance and peace building

In South Darfur (Belil and Kass), CIS takes an innovative approach to supporting local governance through the Dutch funded 'EVC' project (2015-2018). Building on previous projects, a key aim of the current project is to strengthen the capacity of women and youth, and to promote inclusive community development. In so doing, the project aims to influence the governance and decision making processes at household, village and locality levels, and to ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups are reflected in the development priorities of the villages. The use of the 'Community Score Card' aims to support local bodies in their negotiations with government and service providers. This project is further boosted by activities funded under the *Darfur Conflict Peace and Stability Fund* (DCPSF).

¹¹⁶ Itto, A. (2006) *Guests at the table? The role of women in peace processes*, in CIS (2013).

¹¹⁷ E Harizi, E S Zaki, B Prato, G Shields. (2007) 'Understanding Policy Volatility in Sudan. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). *IFPRI Discussion Paper 00721*, cited in CIS (2013).

Research Findings in South Darfur

Women are increasingly involved in decision-making but their voices are still low

In vein with recent research in the region (Ritchie 2015-2017), the research in South Darfur indicates that there may be slight shifts in women's inclusion in household decision-making (younger generation), but there has been significant change in women's participation in community forum. Perceptions of rural women and girls by family men, and related gender relations, are slowly improving and evolving, with **'more respect' now given to women and girls** as household and community contributors (beyond just domestic workers and farmers).

Household decision-making: limited change for older women

In general, the research indicated that there has been **limited change** in women's participation in household decision-making in recent times, although new habits may be emerging in the **younger, educated generation**. Women tend to be responsible for domestic affairs such as daily chores, food preparation and distribution, and basic purchases. For any major household decision-making including medium to large household expenses, children going to school, and the marriage of children, women will need to consult with men. In the [target villages](#), it appears that **over 70-80% of women may be 'consulted' in major family decision-making**, with perhaps only 10-20% of women playing a major role. Yet, there was a very slight improving trend towards women's increasing consultation and participation. This was attributed to the increasing level of women's education; and in some villages, to the increasing number of women 'with cash' (men's group, Tanakaro, Kass). Where husbands are present, the ultimate decision itself may still belong to the men, with the persistent notion that 'big' family decisions belong to men. Educational expenses for the children are often organized by women, but with finances provided or authorized by the men (it appears that this expense is more overseen/controlled by men than in other regions for this research). **In FHHs, women may make such decisions, yet often with the authorization of a male neighbour.** In the [IDP areas](#), there were more nuances to local responses, with some women indicating that women's household inclusion had in fact 'worsened' for women or there was very little change. Responses from the adolescent girls suggested that there are more positive changes in the younger generation however, with women's increasing engagement.

Women's community participation: improving

In terms of women's participation in community meetings, **two types of public meetings/gatherings** were reported in target communities: **traditional meetings; and non-traditional community meetings, often supported by NGOs.**

In terms of traditional meetings (*'judiya'*), this includes local justice, coordination and dispute resolution meetings, where community security issues, natural resource management, criminal affairs, domestic/marital conflicts (and divorce) and collective community work (*'nafir'*) are discussed by the village council. The traditional village council that coordinates with the government is known as the 'Popular Committee' (first established by the government around 30 years ago).¹¹⁸ In the [target villages](#), these traditional forum are typically

Box 3.11: VDCs: a strong platform for community development

Described as self-organised grassroots governance structures, VDCs aim to promote the participation of community in the planning and implementation of development initiatives (Abdelghani, 2016). As indicated by several evaluations, VDCs are in reported to be a 'critical' community-based body in South Darfur for coordinating with local NGOs and government in service delivery, and in managing natural resources and conflict. Disputes are common between pastoralists and farmers as well as other traditionally rivaling groups.

¹¹⁸ Interview with CARE EVC staff, Nyala, 19 July 2018.

political bodies, and **remain largely the domain of men** (initiating and coordinating such meetings), although designated leader women may be able to attend such as the traditional *hakamat or sheikat*, or even new women leaders, perhaps 20% of the gathering¹¹⁹. As a key women's representative, the *hakamat* was described to participate in local dispute meetings, meetings with outsiders and visitors. Yet NGO awareness-raising may have increased the inclusion of other strong women in these meetings. In the Arab community, women suggested that 'normal' village women were not able to attend but could support the cooking for the event and enjoy the 'celebration' or party afterwards (women's group, Tanakaro, Belil). In the [IDP areas](#), women's participation in such traditional forum was described as negligible however, with a reported absence of traditional women leaders.

In terms of non-traditional forums, such as those supported by NGOs, the *Village Development Committees* (VDCs) are now considered the main platform for broader community development and the main interface for NGO coordination, with various sub committees falling under their umbrella. The VDC may typically represent a cluster of smaller villages. VDCs are indicated to have approximately 10-15 members, with the inclusion of representatives of thematic groups. Subcommittees may include youth groups, women's committees, NRM committees, education committees, water user committees, and health committees. In South Darfur, CIS has taken a strong focus on enhancing local governance, and increasing women's participation in recent years, and improving local peace building and dispute resolution. Such efforts are currently supported under CIS's *EVC local governance project* and complemented by activities through the *Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund* (DCPSF)¹²⁰ (see Box 3.6). In CIS recent evaluations in Kass, the **VDC has been deemed a 'highly successful'**¹²¹ structure for local governance, and a 'strong instrument'¹²² in reducing conflict over natural resources. Yet in terms of including more 'marginalized groups', the **participation of women** and youth in VDCs was **still indicated as low**¹²³. And even when present, **women's 'meaningful' participation was also lacking** (ibid).

CIS staff emphasized that whilst change was indeed 'incremental' in women getting a 'seat at the table'; the next step was in supporting women's confidence to be active and vocal.¹²⁴ VDCs also suffer from tending towards 'favoritism' in their activities, with 'preferential treatment received by family members of VDC member'. The EVC project aims to address this gender disparity, a key challenge in Darfur and in rural areas in particular, with male dominated decision-making persisting in both the private and public sphere: "women hold very few positions at all levels of governance and decision-making bodies, partially because of exclusion to education and ensuing higher illiteracy levels but also discriminating religious and cultural beliefs and practices"¹²⁵. In bringing up the voice of women, CIS staff report working with the local *hakamat* to shift her role from a vocal warmonger to that of a wise and charismatic peacemaker that can promote key messages in the community, in vein with other organizations in Darfur.¹²⁶ In a recent review of the EVC project (during the research mission), the evaluation consultant highlighted that

¹¹⁹ This was reiterated by a CIS local governance consultant (key informant interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July).

¹²⁰ The DCPSF activities were designed complimentary to ongoing EVC work, and include engaging youth and women in committees managing natural resources, demarcation, health, education, and agriculture. Alongside EVC activities, youth and women were trained to participate and take on leadership roles in the committees.

¹²¹ Forcier Consulting (2017), CIS 'Resilience in the Horn' evaluation.

¹²² Forcier Consulting (2017), CIS 'SEED' evaluation.

¹²³ Forcier Consulting (2017), CIS 'Resilience in the Horn' evaluation.

¹²⁴ Interview with CIS staff, Khartoum.

¹²⁵ CARE (2018) "Every Voice Counts" Sudan, Annual Report, 2017

¹²⁶ Many organisations in Darfur have adopted this strategy to shift the warring role of *hakamas* to those of 'peacemakers' (Interview with the Gender Centre for Research, Khartoum, 10th May 2017).

whilst the training given to VDCs and subcommittees had improved their capacity¹²⁷ (and awareness of gender dynamics amongst other topics), the **high levels of local illiteracy affected the absorption of training messages and importantly, an articulation or formulation of what they had learnt.**¹²⁸

Indicating women's increased engagement in community meetings and decision-making (outside of traditional gatherings), in [target villages](#), women's participation (particularly in subcommittees such as WASH groups) may now be estimated at **40-60% of community thematic meetings, from limited participation in 2003** (less than 20% participation). In some cases, more women than men may even attend. Yet in the more male-dominated VDC meetings, **women's participation may be much lower at 25%**, as indicated by the research responses from the men's group.¹²⁹ However, an earlier evaluation had described this participation in VDCs as 'remarkable progress' and a 'step forward', particularly in a context where men traditionally lead, and women 'take the back seats in meetings' and listen rather than speaking in public gatherings. Men may still dominate in leadership positions though, often holding key positions such as Chairperson, the Secretariat, and Treasurer (Abdelghani, 2016). There was now **increasing acceptability of women's public engagement**, even if her 'meaningful' participation remains low, although women may be unable to attend due to the 'obligation' of domestic chores.

In recent internal focus groups, local women described being able to contribute to a degree but 'active participation' was still frowned upon. Yet CIS consultant highlighted the 'big difference' between now and fifteen years ago, with both women's attendance at public meetings, and their increased permitted mobility (for example to attend training in Nyala or even Khartoum).¹³⁰ Likewise whilst progress is uneven and gradual, the Department of Social Welfare emphasized the significance of rural women attending meetings and even standing up and talking about 'human rights' in Darfur – 'unheard of' fifteen years before. In the [IDP area](#), there were more **mixed results, with women representing 30-70% of attendees in NGO meetings and subcommittees**, reflecting the presence of potentially different ethnic groups and sub-realities within the camp, and also varying experiences of attending meetings. Whilst women were reported to be more independent and confident in the camps, **men dominate in public decision-making** in key bodies – this is perhaps motivated by a need to reassert traditional control and power in a context of increased pressure and insecurity.

Drivers of change: NGOs, education and VSLAs

In summary, the research indicates tangible social change related to women's engagement in (non-traditional) community meetings and decision-making. At the village level, women's increased participation has largely been driven by a push for women's attendance in community committees (in line with legislation) by **NGOs**, with concerted efforts by organizations such as CIS to foster women's inclusion in these various community bodies. Whilst it appears that women's participation is still fairly tokenistic (and women's actual voices are still low), the positive effects of women's increasing community-level inclusion, is indicated to be **slowly changing attitudes** about the importance of women's participation in decision-making at all levels. Yet **indicating a lack of intrinsic value for such participation in itself**, the men mentioned that they

¹²⁷ For example, women were both attending the evaluation meetings and 'talking loudly'.

¹²⁸ Key informant interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July. We discussed a need to incorporate basic methods such as REFLECT to increase both the retention of training material and local self-expression

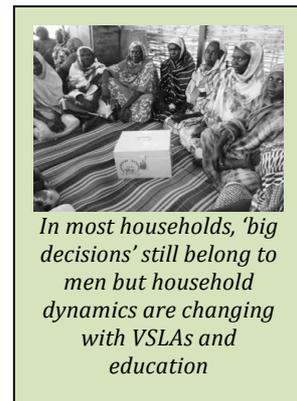
¹²⁹ This resonates with an earlier evaluation (Abdelghani 2016) indicating that the average women representation in the VDCs covered during the evaluation process was 24%.

¹³⁰ Key informant interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July 2018.

encouraged women to join otherwise the NGO would be upset and not return! Women's participation in decision-making was indicated to have been driven also by the growing influence of **girls' education**, and new value and interest in girls' development. It was influenced by **NGO awareness** and insistence to have women present: 'before women were only viewed as creatures that work on the farm, do the housework and care for the children'.¹³¹ Women's interest and 'meaningful' engagement may also be influenced by their **growing public confidence through the VSLAs**. However, despite women attending meetings and knowing more of their rights, CIS partners maintained that village life on the face of it hasn't in fact changed much, in comparison to the dramatic changes observed in the towns (e.g. Nyala). In particular, smaller, remote villages (such as Geldy) are typically still 'closed-minded...and avoid gender trainings...they are afraid for women to have power and rights!' (ibid). Arguably, the persistence of strong patriarchal ideas appears to be more entrenched in more **isolated and marginalized contexts**, with such attitudes and practices holding progress back, as men dominate in critical community matters **often out of fear of change**.

VSLAs: a platform for women's development and empowerment

Expanding on the **VSLAs**, as indicated by regional research (Ritchie 2015-2017), in more 'mature' VSLA communities¹³² (such as in Sangetaa in Kass), the research team may have in fact directly observed both increased levels of participation of women and an increased voice. Local civil society women's representatives in Nyala emphasized how such bodies have built **new connections between women spurring women's own discussion and dialogue** for example, on the importance of education, and how they might collectively improve their lives and health, and combat violence against women and 'even move away from FGM'. They reported that VSLAs were employing the help of strong women leaders such as the *hakamat* and *sheikat*, the male leaders' wives to disseminate positive messages related to women's rights and justice, and advocate against FGM and violence towards women. Likewise, Forcier Consulting's report (Horn of Africa Resilience) indicated that VSLAs in the target localities were emboldening women through their **increased wealth and related status to take on leadership positions**, further increasing their status within the community. The Gender Centre in Khartoum was equally positive of the role of VSLAs in Darfur, particularly their social role in the community although they felt that such groups now needed more '**organisational capacity building**, and even **legal awareness training** if they are to promote change at the community level.¹³³ They mentioned the positive experience of women collectives in Khartoum (women traders), and their successful activism in campaigning for market space. As in Ethiopia and Kenya, women's social organization in VSLAs boosts women's skills and financial literacy, as well as enhances women's confidence and assertiveness. These platforms further foster trading activities and new business initiatives, and trigger women's greater involvement in community social matters and decision-making. For community women that have often missed education, this participation is often described to be the 'largest driver of change', influencing their lives, changing perceptions of women, and even **fostering new self-beliefs** that they could also be leaders (Ritchie, 2017).



¹³¹ Interview with CARE CSO partners, Nyala, 15 July 2018.

¹³² Sadly such communities were not included in the research directly, but observations were gathered by the consultant with the local team.

¹³³ Interview with the Gender Centre for Research, Khartoum, 10th May 2017

Box 3.12: Women's slowly changing roles in the household and community

"Women now have their own voice and can make decisions...this is a very good thing for us and the community..." (Women's group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

"We have become more brave and have learnt from a difficult life...and NGOs have encouraged us [to attend meetings and speak out]" (Women's group, Jimaiza Kamara, Kass)

"Now we can participate in meetings and raise our voice, and the sheiks and NGOs are encouraging us to attend" (Women's group, Tanakaro, Kass)

"Women are now more involved in decision-making [from household level to community level] because increasing number of women have [their own] cash" (Men's group, Tanakaro, Kass)

"There are increasing number of women attending community meetings because awareness has been raised through [NGO] workshops and women's education levels have gone up" (Men's group, Al Salaam, Belil)

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING

- Women are increasingly involved in community decision-making (except traditional meetings) with NGO encouragement, exposure as IDPs and education, shifting local attitudes related to women in decision-making (although practical change is slow).
- In the rural areas, women's 'consultation' in major **household decision-making** (including expenditure, marriage of children etc.) may have risen to **70-80% of households**. Women's involvement in **community decision-making** in thematic bodies has increased: with **40-60% of attendees now women** in local gatherings/committees (except traditional forum, and VDCs), from **less than 20%**.
- In the IDP areas, women's 'consultation' in **major household decision-making** (including expenditure, marriage of children etc.) may be less than **70% of households with more control by men (but shifts in the younger generation)**. Women's involvement in **community decision-making** was more mixed: **30-70% of attendees** may now be women in local gatherings/committees (except traditional forum) influenced by ethnic group, and sub-reality within the camp.
- (Beyond the target areas) In villages with mature VSLAs (such as in Kass), women were self-organising to engage in community social affairs, and campaign for women's rights and justice (with the support of strong women leaders e.g. *hakamat*). **VSLA women with increased wealth were perceived as a higher status.**

3.2.5 Access and participation in basic services (health and education)

Traditionally, women in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies in East Africa were viewed as 'home dwellers', with men's role to protect and look after women in this private domain. As such, women did not 'need' to participate in public services such as education and health (unless there was a health crisis). Educating the girl child was also considered to be of 'little value', with a preference instead to prepare girls for their ultimate marriage and motherhood (Leah and Abdullah (2009) in Dullo (2012)). In terms of participation in health services, previously pastoralist women were cared for within the home and village (and supported in labour with Traditional Birth Assistants). Sick girl children would also remain at home, and receive non-prescribed medicine. This was in stark contrast to the unlimited efforts that might be made to care for sick boy children, ensuring that they were seen by qualified health personnel in medical centres, and even selling family livestock to pay for medical costs (CARE Ethiopia, 2009).

When schools were introduced in pastoralist areas such as northern Ethiopia, there remained initial fears amongst the people that this may lead (educated) girls to abandon their culture, and in particular, possibly threaten the local marriage system. Such fears were partly alleviated as communities experienced benefits of more capable educated girls, and higher numbers of girls were enrolled in school, with a growing value for girls' education.¹³⁴ However, early dropout was common. The low retention rate was due to the weight of domestic chores (particularly due to drought), school expenses and pressure of early marriage. Local conflict was described to be another reason to keep girls at home. The migration calendar was further indicated to be at odds with the school year. Whilst demand was increasing, on the 'supply' side of education, schools were frequently located far from villages (secondary schools in particular), often had missing teachers and lacked facilities and equipment.¹³⁵ The majority of local pastoralists were also still 'not willing' to send their children to school (ibid). Yet recent research in East Africa (Ritchie, 2015-2017) indicated that both attitudes and practices of agro-pastoralist groups towards education were now changing rapidly, with up to 80% of girls attending primary school and 50% in secondary school. In Somaliland in particular, CARE has channeled significant efforts into promoting pastoralist girls' education and empowering girls at school through innovative structures, including Child Education Committees (CECs)¹³⁶. Other structures include Girls' Empowerment Forums (for all girls after Grade 4), and Girls' Leadership training, both facilitated by CARE.¹³⁷

Girls' education

Similarly in Sudan, discriminatory attitudes and practices have been common with respect to rural girls' participation in school 'where perceived private economic rates of returns to the HHs of female education are limited or less than for males' (CIS, 2013). Traditionally, this is because daughters leave the home upon marriage, and then are expected to lead a more domestic-oriented life in the community. Furthermore in rural areas, outside of subsistence agriculture, there are few employment opportunities for women. This is argued to be 'reinforced by low aspirations among girls and women due to lack of role models and encouragement in schools' (ibid.). CIS draws attention to the World Bank report (2012)¹³⁸, with several factors highlighted that influence girls school participation in Sudan, including **puberty and sexuality**, with concerns about girls' safety in school, and particularly parents fearing contact with boys and male teachers and inappropriate physical abuse or harassment. For adolescent girls themselves, **privacy** is also a barrier, particularly when schools lack private toilet facilities for girls. Early marriage is another major constraint to rural girls' participation/continuation in (secondary) education. In some cases, there are also family fears for girls' **physical safety**, especially when distances are long between home and school. Meanwhile in more impoverished rural areas, girls in poor households may miss out on education due to '**perceived and actual costs**' related to girls' schooling.¹³⁹ These costs are both 'direct' (e.g. fees, books, stationary, clothes,

¹³⁴ In Borana, this was attributed to the establishment of a girls' education forum.

¹³⁵ Oxfam (2005) contended that schooling for nomadic and pastoralist societies has often been de-prioritised and not tailored to the context (ignoring linguistic/cultural variations and disconnected from the community) (CARE 2015).

¹³⁶ A key activity of CARE Somalia, CECs act as a bridge between the school and the community, facilitating consultation with different local stakeholders. The CECs usually comprise 7 members including a Secretary (usually the Head Teacher), Chair (active member of community), and 5 members (interested local parents). At least two members are women. The CEC is responsible for making a School Improvement Plan (SIP) including construction needs. They also raise funds from within, and beyond the community (e.g. diaspora) to support school infrastructure and education.

¹³⁷ After Grade 4, each grade selects two class leaders to participate in various training including leadership skills development, child protection, and menstrual hygiene. They are then involved with peer-to-peer training, and act as a go-to focal point for the other girls in the class

¹³⁸ The World Bank (2012) *The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan*, cited in CIS (2013).

¹³⁹ According to UNICEF and Central Bureau of Statistics 2016, the Sudanese government is 'committed to free and compulsory basic education for all' as indicated in various laws and policies: the Interim National

transport) and ‘opportunity costs’ (for example, lost time on household chores and potential earnings), with the latter being higher for girls than boys (CIS, 2013). Further school-based barriers for girls may include a **lack of female teachers and role models**; low Child Friendly School (CFS) standards, including a lack of learning spaces; and a lack of sanitary pads.

As emphasized by CIS (2013), both the level of education, and the educational provider are directly linked to poverty in Sudan.¹⁴⁰ Today the provision of ‘education for all’ in Sudan is guaranteed and framed by various global instruments that Sudan is signatory to including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in addition to an array of national laws, policies and plans. The Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 2005 makes education a ‘right for every citizen and requires the State to guarantee access to free basic education, without discrimination on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, gender or disability’.¹⁴¹ In 2007, the Sudanese government established the *National Girls’ Education Policy* to promote and increase girls’ school attendance. In 2012, Sudan’s Interim Basic Education Strategy was drafted by the Government of Sudan, with the goal of achieving quality basic education in line with the MDG 2015 goals. UNICEF remains the international lead in education in Sudan, and has led several campaigns, including the recent Middle East and North Africa *Global Out-of-School Children Initiative* (UNICEF, 2014). Other recent campaigns have been organized by Ahfad University for Women (‘Education for Each Girl’).¹⁴² In 2013, a significant donor funded programme was launched in Sudan to boost Sudan’s education sector in line with their strategy. With the support of UNICEF and the World Bank, the US\$76.5 million Global Partnership for Education program is focused on improving the learning environment, providing more textbooks, and strengthening the education system’s planning and management mechanisms. **Plan International and Save the Children** are the two main international NGOs supporting education in Sudan.

In Sudan, children start primary school at age 6 (with 8 school grades, known as year 1 basic to year 8 basic), and enter secondary school at age 14 (with 3 school grades, known as grade 1 to grade 3).¹⁴³ The school year typically runs from June to March of the following year. As indicated by MICS (2014), in South Darfur, 67.4% of primary school aged girls were reported to be attending primary school and 65% of boys (ibid). Meanwhile, only 17% of secondary school aged girls were reported to be attending secondary school (with 44% in primary still), and 20% of boys (with 49% in primary still). The World Bank (2012) highlighted that there are a high number of drop outs in basic education in Sudan, with the probability of a student dropping out before grade 8 indicated to be 43%.¹⁴⁴ Yet in later studies, primary school completion rate in South Darfur was in fact shown to be much higher (96%), with 95% effectively transitioning to secondary school.¹⁴⁵ In terms of vocational training for women, particularly linked to post-

Constitution (2005), the Five Year Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-2011; The Sudan Education Status Report 2011; and the Medium-Term Education Sector Strategy 2012-2016). However, they cite that in practice, according to the IPRSP (2011), households may be expected to contribute to a ‘large share’ of school running costs.

¹⁴⁰ Poverty rates are highest among those in the population with no education (59.5%); followed by those with just *Khalwa* schooling (Islamic school) as their highest level of education (50.6%), and those with partial primary education (44%). Poverty rates are lowest among those with some secondary education (30%), and particularly those with post secondary education (8.9%) (Government of Sudan, Sudan Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, September 2011, DRAFT No5, February 7, 2012), cited in CIS (2013).

¹⁴¹ Yet notably, there remain several discriminatory pieces of legislation for women’s eventual work opportunities (CIS 2013). These include the *Sudan Labour Code* (1997) that prohibits the employment of women in ‘occupations which are hazardous, arduous or harmful to their health’.

¹⁴² Interview with Technical Secretariat, UNDP, Khartoum, 11 July 2018.

¹⁴³ UNICEF and Central Bureau of Statistics (2016)

¹⁴⁴ The World Bank (2012). *The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan* cited in UNICEF and Central Bureau of Statistics 2016.

¹⁴⁵ UNICEF and Central Bureau of Statistics (2016).

conflict recovery, CIS (2013) highlights evidence that the peace building and recovery process is not gender-sensitive: the majority of opportunities for skills development and jobs are oriented towards males. Meanwhile for women and girls, vocational skills may often still be linked to dressmaking or other domestic skills that reinforce dominant gender ideologies and which are not always marketable.¹⁴⁶

Maternal health

Turning now to maternal health, in Sudan, as elsewhere in the region, women and girls' access to and use of maternal health services may also be constrained by local traditions, customs and beliefs (CIS, 2013). Yet a number of strategies and policies have been put forth by the government for the improvement of the reproductive and maternal health status in Sudan, and women and girls' participation in local health services. The Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 2005 enshrines the right to maternal health services, including maternity and child care, and medical care for pregnant women.¹⁴⁷ More recently, the *Strategy for Reproductive Health* (2017) was formulated.

In the last three decades, Sudan has in fact made **significant progress** on the ground in terms of advancing maternal and child health.¹⁴⁸ Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Sudan is estimated at 311 per 100,000 live births,¹⁴⁹ improving over two fold since 1990. An earlier study had suggested that maternal mortality might be even higher in South Darfur at 335 per 100,000 live births (SHHS 2010). Yet whilst maternal mortality rates are improving, Sudan is still far from meeting the 2015 MDG target of 134/100,000 (CIS 2013). The MIC Survey (2014) indicates that under Five Mortality has decreased over the last two decades from 104 deaths per thousand live births in 1996, to 68 deaths per thousand live births in 2014. High numbers of maternal deaths in some parts of Sudan reflects 'inequalities in access to health services, socio-cultural barriers which hinder health-seeking behaviour and the gap between rich and poor' (CIS, 2013). Women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth.¹⁵⁰ A crucial intervention for safe motherhood is the presence of a competent health worker (with midwifery skills) at birth (and in case of emergency, transport should ideally be available for women to reach a referral facility for obstetric care).¹⁵¹

In Sudan, the MICS (2014) indicated that the percentage of pregnant assisted by skilled birth attendants during delivery grew to 77.7%. Yet in South Darfur, this is indicated to be lower at 48.6%. Only 10% of women giving birth (live births) in the previous two years had had the delivery in a public or private health facility. Whilst not as severe as South Sudan (Ritchie, 2017b), the high maternal mortality rate may be linked to a **lack of health care workers, facilities, and supplies; poor infrastructure and transport; as well as 'cultural beliefs'** that prevent women from seeking obstetric care, and social habits: with women marrying young and starting to have children early, and delivery outside of health

¹⁴⁶ Plan (2008). *Because I am a Girl: the State of the World's Girls. Special Focus: In the Shadow of War.*

¹⁴⁷ Importantly, Sudan has a *National Health Insurance* scheme (established in 1999), where each citizen is expected to contribute around 30 USD per annum. This gives access to free consultations, maternal health and 25% contribution towards medications. Yet in the IDP camps, fees were originally waived for people. As such, IDPs have become 'dependent' on free services and 'refuse to pay' (interview with Health and Nutrition Advisor CIS, Khartoum, 7 May 2018).

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.emro.who.int/sdn/sudan-events/all-eyes-on-maternal-health.html> Accessed 22 Sept 2018

¹⁴⁹ http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/sdn.pdf?ua=1 Accessed 22 Sept 2018.

¹⁵⁰ These include severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth), infections (usually after childbirth), high blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia), complications from delivery, unsafe abortion. Other complications may be caused by or associated with diseases such as malaria, and AIDS during pregnancy. <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality> Maternal health and newborn health are closely linked. Adolescent girls may face a higher risk of complications and death as a result of pregnancy than older women.

¹⁵¹ Say, L et al. (2014) 'Global causes of maternal death: a WHO systematic analysis'. *The Lancet Global Health* 2(6) in CIS (2013).

care facilities, with traditional birth attendants that are unable to handle complications (CIA, 2017). Other factors include **poverty, distance, and a lack of information**.¹⁵² Maternal mortality is also linked to the ‘**over-intensification of pregnancies**’¹⁵³, common in many parts of Sudan. The total fertility rate¹⁵⁴ is estimated at 5.2 for Sudan, and 6.9 for South Darfur, as indicated by MICS (2014).

In terms of family planning, the MICS (2014) indicates that the use of contraception is **extremely limited** in the country, with 88% not using any form of birth control. South Darfur was reported to be even higher at 95%. CIS (2013) described husband objection and religious beliefs to be key reasons of non-use of family planning in some states.¹⁵⁵ A study in South Darfur (ARC) indicated that the major barriers to formal family planning were a ‘lack of knowledge of methods’ and ‘ill-informed fears about side effects’¹⁵⁶. With concerns over religious beliefs, traditional methods are often considered the most acceptable to men (ibid). In general men may take a ‘minimal role in sharing responsibility for reproductive health matters’, so the burden of responsibility remains often with the women (CIS 2013). Further, family planning has been perceived to threaten the cultural religious practice of large families, with criticism by religious leaders.¹⁵⁷

Research Findings in South Darfur

Primary and Secondary Education

Improved participation of girls in primary education but drop out at secondary level

With conflict and displacement in the research areas (‘until 2013’), local government is still in the process of ‘recovery’ in the education sector in South Darfur. In Belil locality for example, the number of estimated primary schools (Table 3.1) still remains below 2003 levels, although several new secondary schools have reportedly been established. Yet facilities/resources often remain low. Nonetheless, there has been a notable **increase in the participation of girls in school - a major change since 2003 at both primary and secondary level**. The Gender Centre for Research highlighted that the Fur tribe in Darfur was in fact known to be the most ‘open’ to education, compared to Arab or nomadic groups.¹⁵⁸ Yet, with high numbers of both boys and girls still out of school, there have been new national campaigns by UNICEF (with the Ministry of Education) to promote school attendance.¹⁵⁹

Table 3.1: Educational facilities in Belil, South Darfur

State	Locality	School facilities	2003	2018
South Darfur	Belil	# Primary schools	72	45
		# Secondary schools	7	13
		# Private/primary	3	7

Source: Department of Education in South Darfur.

¹⁵² <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

¹⁵³ Interview with Yvonne Uwemana, CARE Sexual Reproductive Health Advisor (East Africa), 29 August 2017

¹⁵⁴ The total fertility rate (TFR) describes the number of live births that a woman may have during her reproductive years (15-49 years) (MICS 2014)

¹⁵⁵ AA Abdel Aziem, DA Rayis, M Mamoun, I Adam (2011). Use of family planning methods in Kassala, Eastern Sudan. BMC Research Notes, 4:43 doi:10.1186/1756-0500-4-43 cited in CIS (2013)

¹⁵⁶ S McNab, I Atieno (2009). Responding to IDP reproductive health needs. FMR35. cited in CIS (2013)

¹⁵⁷ DKT White Paper on Sudan. 2012 cited in CIS (2013)

¹⁵⁸ Interview with the Gender Centre for Research, Khartoum, 10th May 2018.

¹⁵⁹ In 2015, UNICEF conducted a major promotion campaign for the enrolment of more than 300,000 out-of-school children in the country, including in South Darfur, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, and with the support of the EU and the Qatari Educate A Child (EAC). <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/unicef-sudan-to-start-enrolment-campaign-for-300-000-out-of-school-children>

Girls' primary school participation: major positive change

Across the research locations, there has been a **significant rise in girls attending primary school** (aged 6-14 years), with an additional **marked change in community attitudes**. In the **target villages**, it is estimated that on average **60-90% of girls now attend primary school** (grade 1-8), from less than 20-50% in 2003, with lower levels in more remote villages. The Department of Educations suggests that enrolment is closer to 80-90%, slightly higher for boys than girls. Yet as indicated by Global Aid Hand, only 50% of girls may strictly attend full-time due to household and farm chores. In the **IDP areas**, more **than 70-80% of girls now attend primary school**, from less than 20-50% in 2003 in their home villages. In both IDP sites, men reported more girls attending primary school than boys. Notably, whilst not available at the village level, kindergarten 'pre-school' facilities were also reported in some sites within the camp.¹⁶⁰

Across the research sites, there is a **new and growing enthusiasm for primary school attendance by rural girls themselves, and (some of) their families**, with changing community interests placed in girls' skills development, particularly in villages closer to the city and in the IDP camp (as reiterated by the Department for Education). This has been driven by **NGO and government awareness raising** in the villages and camps. At a state level, the Department of Education mentioned UNICEF campaigns, in addition to UNICEF support for school hygiene and teacher training. School participation has also been influenced by **IDP exposure and experience in addition to 'village-to-village interaction'**, with a growing value by village parents in the importance of education, in terms of the potential of gaining salaried jobs and ability to support 'family responsibilities'. Such parents encourage their children to continue and finish their studies. Yet at the village level, girls cited the **lack of female teachers**, and even lack of teachers in general¹⁶¹. They also described the problem of older boys attending classes with younger girls at primary level (Jimaiza Kamara, Beli), and the 'poor quality' of the school environment, with temporary structure schools (up to class 5) (Tanakaro, Kass).

Girls' secondary school participation: some change, but high dropout

Whilst primary school participation has now improved, the Department of Education indicates that participation in secondary school is still low for both boys and girls in the rural areas. Similar to other research localities in East Africa, **vulnerability to drop out of education mainly occurs in the early stages of secondary school (but not in fact at the transition point in South Darfur)**, particularly for girls. This is common in villages where secondary schools are not close by. In the **target villages**, the focus groups indicate an estimated **20-70% of rural girls are in high school** (grade 9-12), from 0-30% in 2003. The Department of Educations suggests that enrolment is closer to 60-70%, slightly higher for boys than girls. In the **IDP area**, at least **50-60% of girls now attend secondary school** from less than 20% in 2003 in their home villages. It appears that entry into secondary in the IDP camp may be higher at over 80% of girls. In rare cases, a few girls were also going on to university '15 girls from this camp' (out of approximately 6,000 families).

¹⁶⁰ Notably, Plan International supports the **concept of 'early child care'** ('more than pre-school'), with children's care provided together with the participation of parents and the community to empower parents and set in motion important food and health habits.

¹⁶¹ At primary level, teachers may also be unqualified 'volunteers' with basic incentives (Interview with local teacher, Nyala, 21 July 2028).

Factors affecting drop out from secondary school: mixed

The Department of Education indicated that in the past, girls might attend just 3-4 years of primary school and then drop out (around 12 years old). Today adolescent girls tend to drop out in the first few years of secondary school (around 16 years of age). From the adolescent girls in the [target villages](#), the main reported factors influencing girls' dropout from secondary school included **early marriage, household chores, an objection of parents to co-education (this arises particularly at the end of primary Class 6), and 'economic reasons'** i.e. family income and poverty (and with this a **boy-bias** i.e. to educate sons over daughters). The men's group mentioned likewise mentioned early marriage as well as weaknesses of the actual schools with a shortage of teachers, and the 'poor' condition of the school environment' (including the lack of sanitary facilities). Other reasons cited in villages further from the city (e.g. Geldy in Belil) included the poor awareness of parents of the **importance of education**, the **low interest by the girls** themselves, and the **distance of the secondary school** – often in town (in Nyala or Kass town), far from the village with costs needed for transportation (and **lack of boarding facilities**). Beyond the travel, it was deemed problematic for girls to be away from their families (adolescent group, Jimaiza Kamara). In such remote villages, the 'majority' of girls were reported to drop out in Grade 1 or 2 of secondary school. CIS staff indicated that **access to secondary schools**¹⁶² was in fact a much-cited reason in local ranking exercises in Belil and Kass.¹⁶³ In the [IDP areas](#), it was clear that dropout for girls was much lower, although pressures such as **early marriage** were still highlighted in addition to the 'high' **expense of school fees** and the **family preference to send boys** to secondary school. The Department of Education described education as more popular amongst IDPs than in the villages.

Factors affecting drop out from secondary school cited by the Department of Education included once again, the **lack of easy access** to secondary schools and **economic pressures** (with a boy bias). Meanwhile the Department of Social Welfare in Nyala emphasized the **low value** attached to girls' education at the village level (with a preference to educate boys). Local NGO staff and CIS consultant re-emphasized the persistence of early marriage – with this linked to both family attitudes towards education for girls; but also access to schools, and the physical and learning environment of those schools with a **lack 'girl friendly spaces'**, a **lack of sanitary materials for girls** (including soaps and sanitary towels), and the **limited resources in the schools** (particularly books). Arguably, there is also an **absence of female educated role models** in the village. With dropout from the school system, if not already married, girls often succumb to teenage marriage. In this analysis, it is clear that there are several reasons for reported drop out by communities and key informants, and they are in fact embedded in each other, and often difficult to separate. Yet in general, it appears that **the combination of household poverty, the low parental value/support for girls' education, and the lack of local access to single-sex secondary schools are the primary collective reasons for girls dropping out**, to then subsequently get married. Further reasons would include the quality of the school, and school resources.

Indicating a broader issue of low general family interest in higher education, the Department of Education emphasized that they also faced a problem with boys dropping out for choice-driven 'economic' reasons (by 15-16 years old). Boys were mainly impatient to find a job, and would drop school if opportunities arose in the military or to work in the mines. Adolescent boys were also reported to be 'fleeing' the country to seek new opportunities elsewhere – initially going to 'Chad, Libya and Israel', with this phenomenon 'getting worse'. From the educational sector perspective, a major weakness in South

¹⁶² "For boys, they may stay with relatives but this is less acceptable for girls".

¹⁶³ CIS technical staff, Khartoum.

Darfur is the high number of unqualified teachers, with up to half the teachers not 'classroom ready'.¹⁶⁴ Out of the towns, beyond the lack of qualified teachers, there is also a general lack of staff in schools (with little interest or incentives to work in the 'insecure' rural areas). The local Department of Education in Belil bemoaned the 'overwhelming' challenges that the sector faced from staffing to basic classroom school furniture and facilities, and schoolbooks.¹⁶⁵ Going beyond campaigns and advocacy by NGOs and UNICEF, they called now for urgent support to basic school infrastructure and resources. Rather than channeling further resources however, Plan International argues that there should a **greater focus on student 'retention, performance and achievement' through school improvement plan committees, and building the capacity of students and parents.**

Box 3.13: Changing perspectives on girls' education

"Today everyone is equal, and all girls are keen to pursue her rights to an education"
(Men's group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

"It is normal to send our girls to school today, and we now believe strongly in education – even our husbands agree with us - and we will do anything to send our girls to school...we missed out " (Women's group, Geldy, Belil)

"We only really began sending girls to school three years ago but it is now becoming more and more common for girls to go to school. The village is now really keen on education and is even ready to support the construction of a [secondary] school."
(Women's group, Tanakaro, Kass)

"At secondary level, more boys go to school than girls...families still prefer to educate boys over girls" (Adolescent group, Al Salaam, Belil)

"The girls drop out of secondary because the school is far (in Kass town) and parents do not like girls to travel alone...the parent's economic situation is also a constraint for girls "
(Adolescent group, Jimaiza Kamara , Kass)

Interestingly, alongside a new value for girls' education as 'better wives' (more capable) with more 'chance for work,' **new preferences in women's adult education** are also emerging: 'although the educated women are few, they are respected and their opinions are heard within the families and society' (adolescent girls group, Jimaiza Kamara, Belil). With a lack of education and low levels of illiteracy amongst the women (the majority of women over 25 have either no schooling, or only *Khalwa* schooling and/or a few years of primary), many **women are keen to attend non-formal education** (reading and writing). Such skills building- through formal and informal education - was described as the 'best accelerator' for change for women and girls.¹⁶⁶ In Jimaiza Kamara, adolescent girls interestingly voiced their hopes in the newly established **VSLAs as a way of women and girls improving themselves**, and enhancing their community status in the future – and bringing new opportunities for change [for women's and girls' lives]. Whilst the VSLAs were still in their stages, this sentiment was echoed across several of the target villages.

Maternal health¹⁶⁷

Indicating a nuanced picture of access to health services, in [target villages](#), community representatives reported the

Improved maternal health but rural health facilities lacking and usage low

¹⁶⁴ See also <https://www.unicef.org/sudan/education.html>

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Department of Education, Belil locality, 19 July 2018.

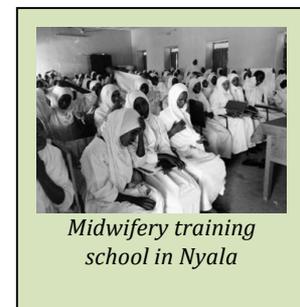
¹⁶⁶ Interview with Dr Magda Ahmed, CARE Consultant Nyala, 20 July 2018.

¹⁶⁷ This area was only lightly investigated at the village level due to time pressure.

existence of a local health facility in Belil but such facilities were absent in target research villages in Kass. The Department of Health reported that there were a total of 383 health facilities (this includes primary, secondary and tertiary facilities at village, locality and state levels) in South Darfur, with Nyala, the state capital boasting a hospital (and teaching hospital) and specialized maternal health clinic.¹⁶⁸ At the locality level, there are Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) and rural hospitals. Meanwhile, the most basic facility includes the Primary Health Unit (PHU), which may serve several villages. In the past decade, the construction of primary health facilities is reported to have doubled.¹⁶⁹ Yet in Darfur, government health staff are often lacking at this level in addition to necessary equipment and resources (ibid). In the [IDP areas](#) however, health facilities and resources are much stronger with health posts and wards for giving birth.

Birth practices: improvement in attendance

At the village level, the government policy is to have, at minimum, trained midwives¹⁷⁰ available to support maternal health. At present there are 1,700 midwives across South Darfur state.¹⁷¹ Reflecting an improvement in access to such support at the village level, and women's health campaigns, the local health officials described tangible shifts in terms of women's attitudes and practices related to maternal health, and maintained that rural women were now giving birth with trained midwives in attendance in the majority of cases (80%).¹⁷² Yet from the research, this may depend on the village remoteness and availability of midwives. In the [target villages](#), one community reported a complete absence of a trained midwife, or trained midwife assistant, relying instead on Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) (Tanakaro). In vein with local discussions, CIS management proposed a more realistic estimate of **60% of village births that may have trained midwives in attendance**. Meanwhile, clinic births still remain exceptional, with only **10-20% of deliveries reported to be carried out in health facilities** in the research villages ('emergency' cases only).



To date, with a lack of facilities, the government has not yet promoted the delivery of babies in clinics (in contrast to policies in neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia). UNFPA described villagers as not yet 'trusting' health centres. Yet from previous regional research, it may also be influenced by the 'habit' of rural people and a keenness to be discreet. Health facilities may also be considered far from the home. In Sudan, there are also fears related to potential costs of using the clinics. **Prenatal and antenatal checks are becoming increasingly common however, with over 40% of pregnant young women reporting using such services (particularly new mothers), from under 10% in 2003.**¹⁷³ From previous research however, women may tend to give up on such checks in later pregnancies (unless she faces particular health issues/concerns).

In the [IDP areas](#), trained midwives were more available and births in clinics becoming increasingly common, with **over 50% of deliveries taking place in such facilities** – with both increased awareness by NGOs and convenient health posts. Prenatal and antenatal

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Department of Health, Nyala, 15 July 2018.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Health and Nutrition Advisor CIS, Khartoum, 7 May 2018.

¹⁷⁰ Certified midwives are also trained on topics such as the risks of early marriage/pregnancy (for example, [fistula](#)), and health problems associated with [FGM](#). UNFPA argues that there remains a lack of special attention to fistula and is a '**neglected disability**', affecting typically 13-18 year olds (Interview with UNFPA, Khartoum, 16 May 2018).

¹⁷¹ Interview with Department of Health, Nyala, 15 July 2018.

¹⁷² Interview with State Head Midwife trainer. Department of Health, Nyala, 15 July 2018

¹⁷³ Local health officials cited similar figures. (Interview with State Head Midwife trainer. Department of Health, Nyala, 15 July 2018).

checks are now becoming the 'norm', with over **80% of pregnant young women using such services (particularly new mothers)**.

In terms of **family planning**, rural women appeared to be both afraid to consider this (and even talk about it), and feared their husband's reaction ('*men do not agree with this as it is considered un-Islamic*' (women's group, Geldy, Belil). Large family size was still the norm and much valued, with women (over 40 years) in both locations reporting an average of **5-6 children (3-9 typically reported)**. According to the health official in Nyala, there is still very low adoption of family planning amongst rural women with less than 10% usage (although this is reported to have climbed from negligible numbers in 2003). Oral pills are the most commonly sought formal contraception, with injections becoming increasingly popular).

In the [target villages](#), women and adolescent girls knew very little about **birth control measures** (except in Draib El Reigh), and men and women's groups almost exclusively denied using contraception. It remains a highly sensitive topic at the local level. To tackle this perception, the health clinic may emphasise 'spacing' as opposed to birth control. Both NGOs and the MOH are trying to raise awareness of family planning measures, particularly to reduce the death of young women.¹⁷⁴ Yet with **limited effective family-planning campaigns (and a lack of school sex education)**, there has been little progress in family size in target research communities. This contrasts to CARE operational areas in neighbouring countries such as Rwanda where theatre and songs are used to shift behavior.¹⁷⁵ In the [IDP areas](#), the use of birth control was reported to be much higher than in the villages with intensive awareness-raising by organizations such as IMC. An estimated **30% of women may now use family planning**, as reported by the women's groups. Departing from village realities, where the subject appeared to be extremely taboo, one of the men's groups even mentioned that both husbands and wives might visit the clinic together.

Maternal-child nutrition: mixed findings

Taking a special, brief look at emerging new practices related to **maternal-child nutrition**, the research incorporated a short discussion on the nature of diets of pregnant mothers and exclusive breastfeeding with adolescent girls. In terms of the diets of pregnant mothers, adolescent girls described women consuming 'vegetables, fruit and milk'. In all of the research sites, adolescent girls reported breastfeeding up to 18-24 months unless the mother is sick, or pregnant, with 'no changes to these practices'. The notion of '**exclusive** **breast-feeding was not fully understood** (with a rule of only breast milk for the first 6 months). In general as in South Sudan, maternal-child related health and nutrition practices are indicated to be influenced by proximity to urban areas, exposure as IDPs, the age and educational background of the women, and scope of local health facilities. Sharp (2017) also highlights the marital status of women, with FHHs suffering higher burdens of work and being unable to feed and look after the children sufficiently.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with State Head Midwife trainer. Department of Health, Nyala, 15 July 2018

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Yvonne Uwemana, CARE Sexual Reproductive Health Advisor (East Africa), 29 August 2017.

Box 3.14: Perspectives on family planning

“Now there is some family planning [methods used] which we get from doctors in Nyala ...it is not like the 15-20 years ago when there was no family planning and limited awareness by the families and women” (Adolescent group, Draib El Reigh, Belil)

“We don’t know much about the benefits [of family planning]...We don’t have to take contraceptives because we want large families” (Women’s group, Tanakaro, Kass)

“We now use family planning methods here, for example, we have injections and take pills” (Women’s group, Al Salaam, Belil)

Summary: Change (2003-2018) and Range in Access to EDUCATION and HEALTH

In terms of girls’ education, with UNICEF campaigns and NGO/government awareness, there is a significant increase in participation of girls in school, particularly primary level (grades 1-8), and early secondary. (Maternal) health campaigns have had mixed results with some improvement in births with trained birth attendants, antenatal/post natal tests but uneven progress in deliveries in clinics family planning and maternal nutrition.

- In the rural areas, it is estimated that on average **60-90% of girls now attend primary school** (grade 1-8), from less than 20-50% in 2003. Participation of girls in secondary education is still relatively low, with **20-70% of rural girls starting high school** (from 0-30%).
- In the IDP areas, it is estimated that on average **70-80% of girls now attend primary school** (from 20-50%). Participation of girls in secondary education may be **50-70% of rural girls** (from 20-50%)

Household poverty, the low parental value for girls’ education, and the lack of local access to single-sex secondary schools are the key reasons for girls’ drop out.

In terms of maternal health, there are mixed improvements in each location:

- In the rural areas, **10-20% of women and girls may give birth in clinics** (emergency only), and **40% of mothers report pre-birth health checks** (from under 10%). Family planning use was limited, with unknown figures
- In the IDP areas, with higher number of facilities, **over 50% of women and girls may give birth in clinics** and **over 80% of mothers report pre-birth health checks**, from negligible numbers. Family planning use was estimated at **30% of women**.

Drawing all of the key findings together, this chapter has indicated mixed results in terms of rural women and girls’ norms and barriers in target communities. An increasing participation in girls’ education has been shown to be particularly notable (see summary Table 3.2). Yet whilst useful as a quantitative overview, it is important to highlight that the table does not capture the subtle differences and change at the local level (in particular in attitudes and perspectives). Such nuances are further discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

Table 3.2: Summary of 'change and range' in selected social norms/barriers for Rural women and girls in target sites in Belil and Kass in South Darfur (2003-2018)

Indicator (estimated % women/girls)	RURAL AREAS 2018 (2003)	IDP SITES 2018 (2003)
I Harmful traditional practices		
FGM***	80-90% Belil 10-90% Kass Type I dominant 7-10 yrs	>30-50% Type I dominant 7-10 yrs
Arranged marriage	30-50% (50%+)	30-50% (50%+)
Early marriage (under 14)	Less than 5-10%	Less than 5-10%
Underage marriage (under 18)	60-70%	60-70%
Average marriage age of females	15-19 yrs (12-25 yrs)	15-18 yrs (12-25 yrs)
II Women and girls' domestic workloads		
Time spent collecting <u>water</u> (daily)	0.5-2 hrs (2hrs+)	(1-3 hr (n/a))¹⁷⁶
Time spent collecting <u>firewood</u> (2-3x week) ***	3-10 hrs (< 3 hrs)	~3-10 hrs (n/a) Use of improved stoves Use of charcoal
III Women's access to/control over assets and productive resources		
'Inheritance' of widow by husband's family		<i>(Increasing resistance)</i>
Widows over 40-45 years	10%	10%
Widows under 40 years	Over 50% (only if agreed)	Up to 50% (only if agreed)
Inheritance of assets by women	70-80% Islamic	70-80% Islamic
IV Women's participation in decision-making		
Women's 'consultation' in household major decision-making (% households)	70-80% <i>Growing influence / changing in new generation</i>	70% <i>Mixed influence / fast changing in new generation</i>
Community decision-making (% composition) <i>(Relates to composition of women)</i>	40-60% female attendees (less than 20%)	30-70% female attendees (less than 20%)
V Women and girls' participation in basic services: EDUCATION and HEALTH		
Primary education	60-90% (less than 20-50%)	70-80% (less than 20-50%)
Secondary education (after 14 years)	20-70% (less than 20-50%)	50-70% (less than 20-50%)
Births in clinics	10-20%	Over 50%
Use of formal family planning	Limited	30%

*** These norms are proving the most difficult to change.

Note: % estimates are based on qualitative research (focus group) discussions and aim to provide an approximate indicator of change only, and local trends.

¹⁷⁶ Note: This indicator was distorted by the current non-functioning of camp water points. Usually IDP areas have good access to water.

IV TRENDS AND ACTORS INFLUENCING RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS' NORMS IN BELIL AND KASS IN SOUTH DARFUR

There are a number of regional trends and dynamics that are influencing pastoralist and agro-pastoralist lives in the Horn of Africa, in particular those of women and girls. Less positively, these include external pressures such as climate change and drought, and the reduction in rangeland and access to resources with deteriorating conditions and expanding agriculture. More positively, these include engagement in non-traditional livelihoods (e.g. enterprise and farming). Flintan (2012) and Ritchie (2015-2017) indicate that new livelihood practices and settled lifestyles are becoming visible in agro-pastoralist communities, influencing women and girls' cultural practices, access to resources, and opportunities. These various factors have led to girls to attend school, and women to engage in trading, business and employment.

Building on Chapter 3, this section briefly examines **general trends** that are affecting agro-pastoralist women and girls' norms in East Africa, and then elaborates on the **specific role of key actors/organizations** at the local level in Belil and Kass influencing communities and change processes. *An expanded version of general trends and dynamics affecting pastoralism appears in Appendix 7.*

4.1 GENERAL AGRO-PASTORALIST TRENDS AND DYNAMICS

Evolving livelihoods with mixed influences for rural women and girls

Agro-pastoralist communities in the Horn of Africa struggle with increasing **environmental pressures**, including degraded or shrinking rangelands, climate change and increasing incidences of drought, as well as growing populations. Partly as a result of these pressures, a concerning cultural trend since is the *loss of influence of pastoralist elders* and local respect, particularly in the resolution of local clashes over social and economic resources, leading to 'endemic' conflicts and disagreements. Traditional community institutions have been negatively affected with pastoralists dropping out of system and losing their connection to their clans (with the added vulnerability that this brings), and clan leaders no longer sharing common resources or benefits bestowed upon the community (Brocklesby et al. in CARE, 2009). There is also competition with formal governance systems, often with younger leaders, threatening the role of elders and their accumulated knowledge in pastoralist society (ICMC, 2009). For women, this may exacerbate their vulnerability, as social protection mechanisms are undermined. Yet there are also examples of where traditional and formal governance systems can coordinate and be integrated.

With strains on traditional livelihoods, agro-pastoralists in these regions are 'increasingly looking beyond livestock to other means of generating income in order to **diversify their livelihoods** and spread risk'. Farming has become popular including maize, corn and teff in countries such as Ethiopia (Ritchie, 2015). Women are described to be at the 'centre' of these emerging 'non-traditional livelihood' endeavours, with mixed social and cultural consequences. For off-farm activities in particular, women may be limited by mobility, access to resources and credit, cultural/religious constraints and the nature of the task. Pastoral women's diversification efforts may be further constrained by a lack of skills, ideas or ability to innovate (Flintan, 2007). In addition, evolving livelihoods and agro-pastoralist society are being influenced by **local services including education, and participation in VSLAs and petty trading**, as well as less positive **social trends**, such as the rising phenomenon of *khat* chewing amongst pastoralist men (and some women) in Somali areas, Ethiopia and north Kenya, increasing women's domestic burdens.

4.2 ROLE OF LOCAL CHANGE AGENTS / CHANGE INHIBITORS

Going beyond these general trends, the research endeavoured to appreciate more **grassroots community-level dynamics** in the context of South Darfur, Sudan. In particular, the research examined **the role of local change agents (or inhibitors)** – from both inside and outside of the community - that are further influencing attitudes and practices related to rural women and girls lives at the community and household level.¹⁷⁷ This included the role of government (and schools), NGOs, (formal) religious institutions, families and clans, local elders and leaders, strong and charismatic women, and the media. With experience as IDPs, and exposure, there are new attitudes and perspectives. Overall, the strongest positive influence on local girls' development was reported to be the new **role of education** in their lives (by adolescent girls, women and men). Religious leaders and elders were seen to be the community group that had the least progressive influence, or were neutral in women and girls' development.

4.2.1 Government/basic services: GROWING INFLUENCE (FOR EDUCATION)

In the past 15 years, basic government structures and services have been disrupted or destroyed with war and unrest in South Darfur. Ongoing efforts at recovery and development have been taking place, particularly since 2013 in the health and education sectors. At the local level, actual government support to practical community development has been weak in the rural areas. This is both due to security as well as local capacity and resources, with training and workshops often taking place only in urban areas. Outside of towns, road infrastructure (roads) remains undeveloped, with accessibility poor in the rainy season. Albeit with limited delivery capacity, government services include educational services (primary and secondary schools), and health facilities and services (at primary, secondary and tertiary levels). There has also been some support to the justice sector (formal courts). Beyond the coverage of basic services, the development of government legislation, at both national or state level aims to support women's rights and justice. Yet in all of the women's groups, whilst precise knowledge on legislation was not investigated, women emphasized that new laws and policies had 'little impact' on community life.

Arguably, for the development of women and girls in rural communities, the most significant impact and effects of the government has been in the **education sector, with the promotion of school participation, and attendance of girls, particularly with campaigns by UNICEF**. All village focus groups emphasized the big change that this has brought to girls' lives, empowering them with new knowledge, skills and ideas, in particular in the IDP camp. Yet they admitted that resources and capacity were low - with a lack of qualified teachers and a lack of female teachers - and drop out was high in the early stages of secondary school. Nonetheless girls' education is having knock-on effects to the perception of women and girls, and their potential capacities in the home, community and beyond. Alongside exposure as IDPs, school education has also encouraged the practical use of maternal health services by women and girls in the IDP camps, and the seeking of justice. To boost girls' participation in secondary level, communities highlighted the need for single-sex 'boarding schools' for girls. Whilst not emphasized, there is a growing gap between schoolgirls, and women (and girls) that have had little or no education. Yet with a growing value for women's development, women voiced strong interest in pursuing non-formal or vocational education.

¹⁷⁷ This was particularly discussed with the women's groups, using additional ethnographic tools to measure the weight/nature of influence of different actors in women and girls' lives.

4.2.2 NGOs: HIGH POSITIVE INFLUENCE

In the government's so-called 'Sudanisation policy', for every project, international NGOs require a local partner (registered civil society organisations (CSO)). Local VDCs can also be considered a community based CSO. In Darfur, registered partner CSOs of CIS include Global Aid Hand in addition to Jebbra Mira Organisation for Rural Development, Asharook Organisation, and Amal Darfur. Other CSOs met include the Women's Union in Nyala.¹⁷⁸ In target communities, NGOs were valued highly for providing training, awareness and workshops at the local level. In particular, NGOs are cited to have supported FGM awareness campaigns (**Saleema Initiative**) and training on gender violence (and support to community Women Centres by organizations such as Global Aid Hand). Notably in the target research localities, CIS has channeled much effort into **community health, access to water** (rehabilitation of water points) and the **strengthening of local governance** through capacity building of **VDCs and sub committees (including VSLAs)**, and encouraging women's participation in such meetings. Key thematic interventions that were emphasized by the women and girls' themselves included **WASH interventions (improving access to water); health, nutrition and hygiene messages**; and notably the popular, **VSLAs**. In some communities (in Belil), **vocational training skills** were also highlighted, such as food processing.

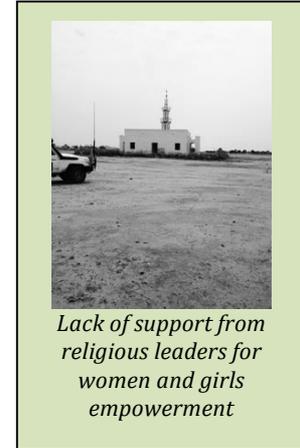
It is pertinent to draw attention to the evolving central role (and potential impact) that **VSLAs may play in women's development in South Darfur**. NGOs such as CARE have been highly effective in rural women's empowerment in the Horn of Africa through such interventions. The **VSLAs** are now an extremely popular approach for women's community development (viewed positively in research (Ritchie, 2015-2017)), and have boosted women's business activities and trends of petty trading. This has brought tangible change into women's socio-economic lives in the family (as household economic agents) as well as at the community level (with a stronger voice in decision-making). As in regional research, where present in South Darfur, these groups have proven to permit new financial literacy, savings and new economic endeavours. Groups in the region have cited the importance of VSLAs for saving, support to household expenses and investment in resources. With women's new purchasing power, VSLA groups have been described to enhance household food security, and to allow women to directly support children's education (Spoelder et al., 2016). Unleashing women's capacity to be active in their households and communities, women described a new confidence to purchase commodities in the market (without their husbands' permission) and to raise their voices to 'local authorities' (ibid.). In Ethiopia, VSLAs have permitted social activism and women's engagement in social protection, through alerting local leaders on forced marriage or FGM/C (Ritchie, 2015). In South Darfur, women and men in all village locations were positive about VSLAs, and emphasized a need for further efforts such as extending **vocational training** to support women's business ventures. Local female officials mentioned **barriers to women's engagement in larger trading, with a need to potentially engage men** to create stronger community support at the local level. **Access to external finance** also remains a challenge.



¹⁷⁸ The role of the **diaspora** in supporting local civil society and community development was mentioned and needs further attention.

4.2.3 Religious groups/mosques: MIXED INFLUENCE

The mosque was deemed to have **significant influence on community lives** in preaching good Islamic practices and moral behaviour, as indicated by all village groups. With the support and backing of the government, Imams were reported to play a key role in promoting 'Islamic systems and norms' in marital and property issues, with their advice and counsel sought on inheritance. Going beyond their usual topics of guidance, the Imams were importantly deliberately engaged in the **UNICEF Saleema campaign**, and 'several spoke up against FGM' in key events. Yet besides this support, according to local women civil society representatives in Nyala, the religious people have not really 'activated' their role in standing up more firmly or consistently against FGM, in addition to other harmful traditional practices for women and girls. CIS partners described the religious leaders as often uneducated and thus 'holding back change', with conservative ideas and a male-bias: 'religious representatives [still] maintain that the women's role is in the house or on the farm'. They emphasized that religious leaders did not address crucial every day issues that shape women and girls' lives, but were more politically oriented. Meanwhile, in terms of education, the local Department of Education in Nyala described a 'disconnect' at the ministry level, with a lack of collaborative messaging, i.e. between the ministries of education and religious affairs. Whilst religious leaders may promote 'equality and education', they tend to focus on children's **participation in the khalwas** (drawing on salafist religious ideas), and do not explicitly promote girls' mainstream education. There is equally an **absence of religious guidance in other domains of women and girls' lives**: including health, domestic violence and justice.



4.2.4 Families and youth: MEDIUM / MIXED INFLUENCE

The **role of the family is described as crucial in negotiating norms and traditions**, and engaging in new activities. In some cases, 'ignorant' parents are reported to block girls' development through forced or arranged marriage (**fathers**) or 'not valuing education'. In particular, (less educated) **mothers and grandmothers may play a role in maintaining discriminatory norms** for girls, often to ensure their marriageability and to avoid public shaming. Yet education and displacement has led to a 'new concept' of girls, and new value attributed to their worth within and beyond the household. Whilst new perspectives emerge on the worth and prospects of girls, often overlooked is the **role of male youth in families and clans, in perpetuating the status quo** through a need to demonstrate aggression and 'leadership' to be considered a proper 'man' both at household and community level. The importance of **youth clubs and networks** was in fact emphasized by NGOs and international organizations in promoting change for the new generation. Yet further attention is still needed on the evolving role of male youth in the family and community, in championing rights, peace and gender equality from the household up. To foster broader social change, male youth leaders need to be more actively engaged, and schools need to be better linked to community youth clubs and committees.¹⁷⁹ School-aged boys and girls can then engage in collaborative gender rights initiatives, alongside peace building within schools, and between schools.

¹⁷⁹ CARE Somalia has strong experience in this domain in Somaliland (Ritchie 2017a).

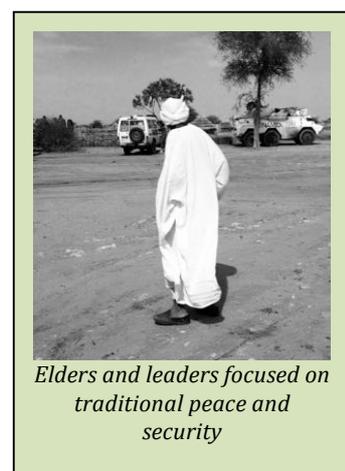
4.2.5 Strong women: MEDIUM INFLUENCE (HIGH POTENTIAL)

Women and adolescent girls' groups highlighted the **importance of strong and charismatic women** that can 'speak up', and act as **role models** for community women as leaders, teachers, and businesswomen; provide **guidance** to the other women; and **engage in decision-making**. Traditionally in Darfur, the **sheikat**, leaders' wives and the **hakamat**, have played these roles. Whilst the voices of other women may still be limited, women emphasized the increasing phenomenon of women participating in forum at the community level (VDCs and NGO established committees). In particular, **educated women and VSLA women** were described to be gaining respect by men in the community and society, and able to voice their opinions. **Women that have 'money'** were also indicated to have a higher status, and thus credibility to speak. Meanwhile trained **midwives** play a strong potential role in social dialogue related to FGM/C and early marriage, and advice on maternal health. Beyond participation in community meetings, strong women were described to organize community voluntary initiatives (e.g. in Jimaiza Kamara), such as mobilizing households for village cleaning efforts, and support to MOH vaccination campaigns. Village men emphasized the importance of women and girls' education in women playing stronger community roles and participating in community affairs. Yet as indicated by local women civil society representatives Nyala, women leaders still face **challenges of men's 'mindsets'**. There also remains a **stark absence of sufficient and diverse female role models** for girls to imagine a different life (i.e. as successful farmers, teachers and businesswomen). Further, there are **limitations in women's access to assets** to realize community/state initiatives. As indicated in Nyala, there are many women's civil society organizations that are now registered and stand as potential role models for change but remain inactive with little access to resources.



4.2.6 Elders and traditional leaders: MIXED INFLUENCE (HIGH POTENTIAL)

As in regional studies, the traditional leaders and elders (related to **mostly male representatives**) were described to play a **strong role in community affairs**, including overseeing community security, conflict resolution and marital issues. Yet in community and social management, the elders are reported to **not really be strongly involved in women's and girls' rights and roles** (outside of marital issues). Instead, the men tend to focus on 'larger issues' of politics, conflict, NRM and peace. Yet in one community (Tanakaro), men were cited to be actively engaged in trying to support girls' participation in education (secondary). In general in rural areas, elders tend to preach about traditional village life and be more resistant to new practices, holding onto 'older' ideas about women and girls. In Geldy for example, men prohibited girls possessing mobile phones 'until marriage', possibly motivated by curbing boy-girl relationships (and pre-marital sex). In contrast to other regions in this research in East Africa (Ritchie, 2016), there was a notable lack of criticism by village women and girls of the constraints that elders pose on their lives. This may be linked to an absence of 'critical thinking' in school education¹⁸⁰, a lack of exposure to



¹⁸⁰ In Draib El Reigh, adolescent girls attributed '70% of change [in women and girls' lives]', as actually influenced by organisations.

media and traditional deference to authority figures. Yet in more ‘interactive’ IDP areas (with mixed populations, higher mobility and presence of organizations), women were more vociferous in this regard and emphasized the lack of support of elders in women’s empowerment. Across the men’s meetings however, men reported in fact being supportive of the concept of women and girls’ development, and felt that women’s development was positive for stronger community development.

4.2.7 Media and communications: *LOW INFLUENCE (HIGH POTENTIAL)*

The main reported media that is available in the target villages and IDP camps was radio (with limited access to power, TV watching is rare). Yet whilst radio stations were apparently accessible and reception fairly good, radio listening amongst the women was cited to be low (compared to regions such as rural Somaliland), although it appears that this was higher amongst the younger generation (possibly through their mobile phones). Notably, low radio listening habits in the rural areas remains problematic when major advocacy efforts are being specifically channeled into key broadcasts. In exploring communication mediums and devices, the **usage of mobile phones** was lightly investigated in both the women and adolescent groups. **This was reportedly used for ‘chatting, texting and listening’.** **Amongst adolescents, mobile phone possession was indicated to be 20-60%.** In villages closer to the city (Draib El Reigh), 60% of the adolescent girls reported possessing mobile phones, with 20% possessing a smart phone. In Geldy and more remote villages such as Tanakaro, mobile phone possession was reportedly half of this, with resistance indicated by parents from the men’s group (Geldy). Similarly, mobile phones were also common in the village women’s groups – **30-70% of women reported having phones**, with higher numbers of women in villages closer to towns. In contrast, in the IDP areas, mobile phone possession (and hence possibly usage) was indicated to vary greatly – from 10-50% - possibly linked to higher levels of family poverty and a reduction in devices (with men controlling the ‘family’ phone).

From the perspective of women civil society leaders in Nyala, the **mobile phone was now extremely critical for communications and access to information**, although the **availability of power sources for recharging** was described to be a major constraint.¹⁸¹ Women civil society leaders elaborated that mobile phones were now commonly used to access the radio - and ‘men [therefore] can’t control everything now!’ They indicated that it was now easier to listen with the new mobile phones on the market that ‘do not need a headpiece’. The **Radio Nyala** station was reported to be used by Nyala CSOs for ‘women’s livelihood’ messaging. This station was highlighted by women in the villages as useful for ‘hygiene and health’ messages. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Social Welfare highlighted the use of **South Darfur Radio** for celebration days related to gender and girls’ education. Other popular radio stations included **Radio Dabanga** (particularly popular with IDPs). Local women NGO staff in Nyala indicated that women-related radio broadcasts were common on celebration days (for example, Women’s Day), with messages related to women and girls, and family health messages (for example, on malaria). But as yet, there were no talk shows or radio soap operas on local stations. It is clear that both mobile phone usage and radio listening (and even use of the internet, in particular YOU TUBE as a knowledge/educational source) need further exploration and attention for women and girls’ development and empowerment in South Darfur. As



¹⁸¹ Notably, solar power facilities are lacking at the village level (unlike in other rural regions such as Somaliland).

elsewhere in the region, it would also be useful to look closer at how mobile phones are used for social protection.¹⁸²

This chapter drew initial attention to regional trends in agro-pastoralism. It then elaborated on key grassroots influences in target research communities in terms of specific actors that are influencing change processes at the local level. Supported by international organizations such as UNICEF, the increase in girls' school participation through government services has had the largest impact in facilitating change in skills and opportunity for girls, and changing people's perceptions (directly). Driving physical, social and economic change, NGOs through CSOs have been key direct supporters of women's empowerment in supporting the Saleema campaign (against FGM), facilitating access to water (and health/hygiene), participation in local governance, and in the establishment of the popular VSLAs. Beyond basic messaging, the influence and use of the media (radio through mobile phones) and social dialogue was deemed to be still low however, compared to other countries in the region. Meanwhile elders and religious leaders remain only partially active in women and girls' empowerment, with a stronger focus on community politics, security and protection, and the promotion of traditional Islamic norms (religious leaders).

¹⁸² For example, in Afar, Ethiopia, mobile phones are used for preventing forced marriage (with adolescent girls sending text message alerts to schoolteachers) (Ritchie, 2015).

V SYNTHESISING SCOPE OF CHANGE AND TRENDS IN WOMEN AND GIRLS' NORMS

The report has reviewed a number of social norms and barriers related to rural women and girls, with research in Belil and Kass in South Darfur. This has included the status of harmful traditional practices (FGM/C, early/arranged marriage and gender violence), domestic workloads, access to/control over assets and productive resources, gender relations and participation in decision-making, and access/participation in services (education and health). Synthesizing the current scope of women and girls' norms, and the role of local actors, and pushing the analysis further, this chapter summarizes the current progress in norm change (in each area), key drivers of change (actors and pressures), and persisting barriers/resistors. Drawing on key indicators, the chapter then assesses core dimensions of rural women and girl's empowerment in South Darfur.

5.1 PROGRESS TOWARD CHANGE IN S. DARFUR: DRIVERS AND PERSISTING BARRIERS

In assessing evolving rural communities in the research areas, it is crucial to appreciate the fragility of the regional context, environmentally, socially and politically, and the nature of service delivery and aid support. Such dynamics and new opportunities are playing a profound role in generating changes to women and girls' norms, with the pace of change varying within population groups and across different norms.

Social norms that were notably changing included: women and girls' participation in education services, and participation in decision-making. Other norms with mixed indicators included: early and arranged marriage, domestic and community violence, and women's workloads. Norms that are more resistant or slow to change include FGM/C and access to/control over productive resources (land, livestock, property). It is important to highlight that shifts in social norms may in fact be subtle, with attitude change preceding change in practices. The report has added nuances to quantitative reports, particularly around changing perspectives and the role of different actors in change processes.

5.1.1 Rural women and girls' norms that are changing

a) Women and girls' participation in education services

- Women and girls' participation in education services has **increased remarkably in recent years**, with over two thirds of girls in primary school; and over a fifth attending secondary school (and higher in some IDP areas). There is increasing demand for Non-Formal Education by women, with growing impacts on gender attitudes and practices in communities.

Drivers of change, or barriers:

- ✓ Participation in primary education has been driven by **government/UNICEF campaigns**, and some **NGO support to schools**. Primary school has now gained community acceptance, with the generation of more capable and confident girls that can be responsible and support the family.
- ✓ **Families** may promote girls in school, particularly those who are educated (or women who participate in VSLAs), or who have been exposed to **new ideas as IDPs**.
- ✓ There is new **growing value/interest by families and girls** themselves.
- Yet **less positively**, drop out may be high in the early stages of secondary school – influenced by **physical access (in particular to single sex schools), low parental interest in education (with family preference to send boys), and household**

- poverty*, with the subsequent *early marriage /pregnancy of adolescent girls*. Resources remain low (with a lack of trained/female teachers and facilities).
- In times of stress, **mothers (particularly from FHHs)** may inadvertently act as obstacles to (older) girls' school participation, with environmental and social pressures.
 - Whilst religious leaders support *khalwas* (Islamic schools), there is a **lack of (religious) support** for mainstream education.

b) Women and girls' participation in maternal health services

- At the village level, women and girls' participation in maternal health services is still low, but **attitudes and practices are changing**: over 60% may have a trained midwife in attendance; and over 10-20% of village women may give birth in clinics.
- In IDP areas, health facilities were available. Over 50% of women were reported to give birth in the facilities, and there is new engagement in pre-natal/post natal tests.
- Knowledge and use of formal planning methods remain limited in the villages, but up to 30% of rural women may use contraceptives in the IDP areas.

Drivers of change, or barriers:

- ✓ **Local health facilities have provided key messages** around maternal health, and it is fast becoming the 'norm' for mothers to frequent a clinic for maternal health (particularly in IDP areas).
- ✓ **Trained midwives** play a key role at the village level in maternal advice and support, and birth attendance.
- Access to **health services** has improved in rural villages, although the quality / coverage of services is still limited in many areas, and **people are still distrustful** of such services for deliveries.
- Whilst the **use of family planning** is becoming common in IDP areas, women in the village remain **fearful**, particularly of their husbands that consider this intervention as 'un-Islamic'.
- Breastfeeding is common up to 2 years old, but there is still a **lack of knowledge and awareness** amongst the village women of **exclusive breast-feeding** (for 6 months), and the importance of the diet of pregnant mothers.

c) Gender relations, and participation in decision-making

- Gender relations may be **slowly improving** with more respect, status and value bestowed upon girls and women.
- At a household-level, women's 'consultation' in major decision-making (including expenditure, marriage of children etc.) is high (unchanged) but women's influence is **still low**, although it is **growing** (in the younger, educated generation).
- At a community level, women's involvement in decision-making has more visibly increased (except in traditional dispute discussions): with **over a third of attendees now women** in the villages, but there were more mixed results in meetings in the IDP areas (in both cases, men's voices still dominate though, and women's 'meaningful' participation may still be low).
- **VSLAs** are changing household and community gender dynamics through women's increasing capacity and confidence, engagement in business and social initiatives, and social networks.

Drivers of change, or barriers:

- ✓ Women's community participation in VDCs and sub-committees appears to be driven initially by **NGO pressure, but also more recently, by local governance trainings (CIS)**. (Notably this does not apply to traditional meetings however).

- ✓ **New emerging ‘value’** of the community role of women (related to girls education, and VSLAs) has boosted women’s participation in meetings.
- ✓ **Women’s empowering experience in VSLAs** may also encourage women to participate in community forum.
- ✓ Women’s active engagement (i.e. speaking up) is influenced by her **wealth and status** (note: often this is boosted through VSLAs). It may also be boosted by their networks.
- Less positively, women’s empowerment and participation in community structures and committees may also be undermined by **conservative elders** and culture of male dominance, as ‘resistors to change’ (often driven by a lack of education, and/or fear of change), particularly in more remote and insecure contexts.
- (Older) **women’s high levels of illiteracy** hold back her ability to absorb training in local governance and decision-making.
- **Social attitudes** hold back VSLA women’s engagement in higher-level enterprise, and access to micro-finance.
- **A lack of legal awareness** inhibits women’s ability to promote social change and justice at the local level.

5.1.2 Rural women and girls’ norms that show mixed trends of change

a) Early and arranged marriage reduced, but underage marriage persists

- There are now **very few cases of ‘early’ marriage** (below 14 years old). Yet **adolescent-led marriage** has become the new norm and trend for village girls, in contrast to a broader spectrum of marriage ages in the past. The average marriage age of rural girls currently stands at 15-19 years in the target villages, and 16-18 years in the IDP areas.
- **‘Choice marriages’ are also becoming increasingly the norm** and most favoured (less risk of divorce). ‘Arranged marriage’ has decreased to less than a half of new marriages, with couples now opting for modern ‘choice’ marriages. Such marriage practices allow girls to choose their own marriage time and partner.

Drivers of change, or barriers:

- ✓ Shifts away from early and arranged marriage have been driven by a combination of **exposure as IDPs, girls’ education** (rights and choice), and **NGO awareness**.
- Less positively, **fathers** may still pursue arranged marriages however, particularly with family poverty, but also once out of school, as a form of social protection and to keep the family honor.
- Trends in adolescent-led marriage appear to be driven by **school drop out**, and **peer family/pressure** (‘social expectations’), exacerbated by the increased **interaction between the sexes, poor access to secondary schools** and **poverty**.
- Social dialogue by NGOs is constrained by a **lack of legislation** on underage marriage.
- **Advice or guidance** to delay such marriages is also lacking at both school (absent in curricula) and within the community.
- **More conservative groups (e.g. Arab communities)** hold onto traditional values with higher rates of younger and arranged marriages.
- **A lack of legislation or regulation of dowries** (higher amongst Arab/nomadic groups) can inhibit marriage processes, lead to debt and encourage arranged marriage by parents in times of poverty.
- Driven by men, **polygamy remains common**, with status and labour benefits, and influences the rate of divorce, leading to ‘women managed’ / often neglected households.

b) Domestic and Community Violence

- **Wife battery continues at a household level**, often exacerbated by times of **crises**, yet attitudes appear to be shifting most noticeably in the IDP camps.
- **Rape and sexual violence exists but are mostly indicated to be problematic in during conflict periods** (now reduced with villages more peaceful again), or in isolated situations.
- Women's pursuit of formal justice for domestic violence in the village appears to be limited, with a preference for such issues to be resolved at the local family or community level (due to the perception of shame). Women's access and use of justice may be higher in the IDP camps.

Drivers of change, or barriers:

- ✓ **NGO awareness raising, education** and an emerging knowledge of the law are reducing social acceptability of domestic violence, particularly in the IDP camps.
- ✓ New '**Women Centres**' (Global Aid Hand) in villages may provide local support in pursuing appropriate legal support and justice.
- A lack of frequent trainings and **education of men** inhibits community-wide behaviour change, with cultural acceptance for beating still persisting.
- **Conflict and local tensions** create situations of stress at a domestic level, with women often suffering the brunt of men's frustration in being unable to fulfil their tradition roles in protecting their family, or providing for them.
- **Seasonality can affect incidences of household violence**. During the rainy season, increased incidences of domestic and community violence may occur, with men's **consumption of alcohol** and pressure on local resources.
- At community level, in **isolated situations**, women and girls can be vulnerable to sexual assault or rape, particularly in **less secure areas** such as Kass.

c) Women's workloads

- On the face of it, women's scope of workloads in the villages remains largely unchanged, with continued heavy chores (particularly affecting FHHs and school girls). Yet **water access and availability has improved** at the village level, although **access to fuel/firewood has decreased** dramatically in recent years.
- In the IDP camp, women's access to water is generally good (when water points are functioning). Women's access to firewood remains difficult although women purchase charcoal and use improved (mud) stoves, reducing fuel needs.

Drivers of change, or barriers:

- ✓ **NGOs** have been instrumental in the improvement of water points, and providing training on **improved stoves** (particularly in the IDP camps) - requiring less fuel.
- ✓ **Donkeys and carts** are improving women's burdens at the village level, **possibly driven by men's engagement in collecting firewood for the market**.
- **Seasonal insecurity** (including tribal conflict), **population increase and deforestation** (by men also cutting down trees for sell) are driving a lack of access to firewood in rural areas.
- **A lack of knowledge/access to improved stoves** (and alternative options) is hindering their use and adoption outside of the IDP camps.

5.1.3 *Rural women and girls' norms that indicate slower change / resistance*

a) FGM

- In the past 15 years, there has been a **change in the type of FGM/C** conducted, with a **shift towards Type I Sunna version**; and change in the (average) age: it is now typically carried out on younger girls of 7-10 years old.
- **For new cases of FGM, there have been slight reduction in FGM prevalence** (and it is now hidden), with 90-100% incidence in Belil, and 10-90% in Kass (rural areas), and a possible decrease to 30-50% (IDP areas).

• *Drivers of change, or barriers:*

- ✓ With the support of **NGOs, the 'Saleema' campaign** has been effective in promoting new dialogue, but shifts in type (only) have been most common at the village level.
- ✓ **Trained community midwives** advocate against FGM but advice or guidance on FGM is lacking at school.
- ✓ **Interactive NGO approaches** such as community theatre may be able open up dialogue with local participation.
- FGM/C has **deep roots in local culture and identity**, and is now also tied to possible religious links (Sunna/Islam), which is potentially complicating change.
- **Educated adolescent girls** are beginning to resist, yet this has brought the age of the procedure to down – with less opposition by younger girls.
- **Rural women (and Traditional Cutters)** are also key resisters to change with fears around girls' virginity, and marriage prospects (indicating a link to education). **Local families create further incentives** to retain the practice by still valuing it and making it a condition of marriage.
- **Religious leaders** have supported the Saleema campaign but remain less active in general social dialogue at the local level.
- **Traditional elders** may also be passive in change, as they often view this as a women's issue and not for 'public discussion'.
- **Family men and boys** also perceive the topic to 'belong to women', and are thus less active in changing practices, although the local authorities in the IDP camp may play stronger roles. **Older men** taking on younger brides still place a value on this practice, even in Nyala.
- **The potential efforts of local government, NGOs, and media** have been held back in promoting eradication with **stalled efforts at criminal legislation**.

b) Women's access to/control over productive resources (land, livestock, cash)

- There is **little shift in traditional control and access to resources** (land, livestock and cash), except in FHHs. Wife inheritance (widows that are obliged to remarry her husband's brother/clansmen) has dropped in past several years. For widows over 40-45 years of age, less than 10% may be expected to remarry, although it may still be high for those under 40 years (over half) in research locations. In IDP areas, such 'wife inheritance' practices are beginning to face stronger resistance from women.

• *Drivers of change, or barriers:*

- ✓ **Education, and exposure to new ideas as IDPs** may be slowly driving shifts in attitudes regarding women's choices and entitlements.
- ✓ In the villages, **VSLAs** are shifting the balance in power and resources, as women are able to save and access small funds to invest in their livelihoods (even rent land), and start micro trading activities.

- **Legislation and legal rights** remain less known outside of the urban areas, with people preferring traditional Islamic resolution in the event of death or divorce (settled at the community level).
- Limited (NGO or government) awareness raising has been done in this domain of women's lives, and there is an **absence of social dialogue**.

Overall, these important trends indicate that some norms related to women and girls' may be gradually changing. The process of change appears to be particularly influenced by the cultural roots of norms, family/community attitudes, legislation and access to services, and local insecurity. Environmental factors (e.g. deforestation), educational levels and poverty are further influencing potential change dynamics.

5.2 AGRO-PASTORALIST WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT: ASSESSING CHANGE

In evaluating these trends of change and women's equitable development in rural societies, 'gender-transformative approaches' (e.g. approaches which fundamentally change women's access to productive resources, markets and decision-making)¹⁸³ are urged to appreciate both **evolving norms**, as well as **power relations** that underpin gender inequalities (Njuki and Sanginga 2013). Williams et al. (1994) indicated that understanding different types of power was instrumental to unwrap women's empowerment (see Box 5.1). Oxall (1997) highlighted the particular importance of assessing access to decision-making as a key indicator of change, but also processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space (Rowlands, 1995).

Taking a comprehensive approach, Kabeer (1999, 2005) suggests that women's empowerment may be examined and measured through *agency* (processes by which choices come into effect, including power dimensions), access to resources (medium through which agency is exercised), and ultimately in achievements (outcomes of agency). It is important to note that women's empowerment may also be subtle/gradual, and one dimension of empowerment (e.g. participation in decision-making in household) may have knock-on effects to other dimensions (e.g. access to resources and markets) (Mahmud 2003), particularly if there is contextual receptivity and space for individual and collective agency (Ritchie 2014). Kabeer's empowerment framework is useful for practically assessing and understanding pastoralist women's evolving empowerment and development in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somaliland. Below, the report highlights key selected indicators for women and girls in particular in **changing degrees of agency**, and access to resources:

Box 5.1: Unwrapping notion of power in rural women's development¹⁸⁴

'Power-to' is the capacity to be able to do something. This is a power that is creative and enabling, the essence of individual aspects of empowerment.

'Power-within' relates to the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. It refers to self-confidence, self-awareness and assertiveness.

'Power-with' involves collective power. Women's groups and networks can provide strength to their members through solidarity and support.

¹⁸³ These may include interventions such as social organisation e.g. Self Help Groups/VSLA type interventions and micro-finance; and facilitating access to land (land rights), markets and technology through gender oriented value chain interventions.

¹⁸⁴ Derived from Williams et al (1994), cited in Flintan (2008)

5.2.1 Changing scope of 'agency'

Central to the concept of empowerment, 'agency' refers to the process by which choices are made and come into effect, and is linked to access to resources/services. It draws attention to individual ability (including 'power to' and 'power within'), and collective capacity ('power with'), permitting choice and opportunity. This report has drawn attention to a number of critical factors that have directly boosted this core area of 'agency' in empowerment in the past 15 years for agro-pastoralist women and girls in South Darfur. In particular, this includes:

- **Pastoralist girls' school participation:** Educational campaigns and support have led to new skills, capacity and self-belief amongst schoolgirls, increasing their interaction in decision-making at home and beyond (socio-political outcome), and leading girls to explore alternative livelihoods (economic outcome).
- **Pastoralist women's engagement in VSLAs and community forums:** This has increased women's voice and confidence, leading to greater engagement in community and household decision-making (social, political and economic outcome).

Reflecting upon the scope of these changes, it is necessary to also appreciate **ongoing constraints to women and girls' evolving agency and access to resources**. As indicated in the report, this includes the influence of other actors, including mothers, fathers and elders that can block change (in norms and barriers) and access to emerging services/resources. It also includes the persistence of several entrenched cultural norms that can restrain women and girls' evolving agency. For example, FGM and domestic violence can reduce girls' confidence, capacity and self-esteem (and engagement in education), and the lack of control/access to resources can inhibit engagement in livelihoods. Meanwhile, the weight of domestic chores can consume women and girls' daily energy and time, particularly in more vulnerable households. Deteriorating local environmental conditions (and access to firewood), and a context of risk are exacerbating this. Whilst not extensively discussed, girls' menstruation (and local attitudes and support e.g. access to/provision of sanitary towels) can also influence girls' confidence, engagement in (secondary) school and mobility.

In summary, this chapter has reflected on the progress of change in women and girls' social norms and traditional barriers synthesizing and analysing report findings. Norms that were indicated to be fast changing included girls' participation in education (even if the quality of such education remained questionable, and drop out was high). School participation can be a notable driver of change to other norms including participation in new livelihoods, decision-making and community activism (Ritchie, 2015-17). Norms that were more difficult to change however included those that remained culturally entrenched, including FGM/C and women's access to productive resources. Further analysis on women and girls' empowerment highlighted change in the evolving scope of women and girls' agency also through participation in VSLAs and community structures (e.g. in VDCs). This has generated social, economic and political outcomes influencing women and girls' quality of life, choice, and opportunity.

VI RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY ACTION POINTS

Towards better understanding the nature of women and girls' empowerment and development in target areas in South Darfur, and in working towards resilience, this report has examined selected evolving social norms and barriers. Positively, agro-pastoralist women and girls' norms have been shown to be slowly changing through exposure to education and even life as IDPs. However, changes to more deeply rooted norms are proving difficult, and may require more strategic local support (from charismatic men and women), and stronger methods of 'cultural integration'. In addition, environmental pressures remain considerable, straining women's ongoing development, with high domestic burdens (particularly firewood and fuel) and continued vulnerability to insecurity, conflict and sexual violence. Drawing off Chapter V, this chapter highlights key aspects of processes of change in women and girls' norms (including local allies and tools in change, and counter forces), and identifies practical recommendations and action points for both institutional level, as well as grassroots NGO interventions.

6.1 FOSTERING PROCESSES OF CHANGE

In supporting processes of norm change, women's empowerment and resilience (Box 6.1), this report maintains that it is crucial to recognize and build on **women and girls' agency** (individual and collective), as well as to both identify and leverage other **actors and institutions** that are endeavouring to promote change and development. It is also imperative to **appreciate broader social pressures and environmental trends** that are constraining or blocking these processes.

Box 6.1: Resilience building

In fostering 'resilience', experts recommend an integrated and long-term approach that focuses on three critical capacities at a local level: **absorptive capacity** (e.g. coping strategies, savings groups), **adaptive capacity** (e.g. use of assets, attitudes/motivation, livelihood diversification, human capital) and **transformative capacity** (e.g. governance mechanisms, policies/regulations, community networks, formal safety nets)
Source: Frankenberger (2013)

To date, in target research areas, **increased girls' going to school, women's participation in community forums and engagement in VSLAs** are indicated to be notable drivers of social change for women and girls. Education has begun to enhance girls' capacity, confidence and life prospects, particularly since 2013, with notable increasing value by local communities themselves. Meanwhile, women's organisation through VSLAs is expected to enhance (selected) women's individual capacity and collective action, and women's engagement in business (and the commercial sector). Whilst not yet indicated in this research, this can have knock-on effects to other norms (household cash management, and community decision-making). **Increased access to water** has also importantly led to a reduction in domestic chores. Meanwhile, alleviating the general weight of domestic chores (for girls/women) requires more attention (and access to fuel/improved cook stoves), particularly with deteriorating local conditions. There is also a need to better appreciate and address the role of local elders and religious leaders in change.

Towards developing improved strategies to combat women and girls' discriminatory norms and social barriers - whilst ensuring local resilience - it is vital to appreciate

different types of norms and trends of change, counter forces in the community and local environment, allies in change processes, and tools to facilitate change.

As demonstrated in this research, it is also important to recognize current trends to appreciate and differentiate between norms that are changing (girls' education, women's voice in the community), and those that are resisting, or slow to change (e.g. FGM/C, women's workloads, access to resources and inheritance). Participation in education is can have a strong effect on other norms that are changing (i.e. further propelling change) although rural educational facilities remain weak and under-resourced in South Darfur.

In terms of allies in change, these currently include NGOs, VSLAs, trained midwives, and (potentially) media/radio. Other allies that require more attention include schools, religious leaders, and charismatic local women leaders (role models). Regional research indicates that strong female role models – from within and outside of the community - are critical to positive change in rural agro-pastoralist communities (Ritchie 2015, 2016, 2017). Women involved with teaching, finance, trade and business are viewed particularly highly. The diaspora also represent financial and social allies, and require more attention.¹⁸⁵ Finally, there is a stark gap in more deliberately engaging progressive elders¹⁸⁶ in women and girls development, beyond just encouraging girls' participation in education.

In terms of tools of change, this report highlights the fundamental importance of combining several approaches to drive and harness change including:

- ✓ **Education and literacy** for rural women and girls are crucial propellers of change (particularly if supported by local communities i.e. valued within pastoralist society).
- ✓ **Critical community-based approaches** include facilitating women's discussion and dialogue, women's networks (and collective action), and socio-economic empowerment (e.g. VSLAs, women's committees). Local community awareness raising supports these processes in particular the use of stimulating tools such as community theatre, and community exposure visits.
- ✓ **Law and legislation** may represent complementary practical tools of change such as the *Sudanese Constitution* (formal rights), and gender policies.
- ✓ **Cultural tools in social change** include *religious texts* such as the Koran, local proverbs and laws (cultural/religious rights) – please refer to Ritchie (2016), in addition to community exchange (between villages)
- ✓ Finally, **technology and appropriate innovation** (e.g. water storage, improved local water filters and stoves). In particular, it is important to draw attention to **mobile phones** as *both a communication mechanism, as well as a fast-emerging means for women's broader socio-economic empowerment* in the developing world. This include potential access to the radio, mobile money/banking, and (in future) learning and health (e.g. MHEALTH in India).

¹⁸⁵ Lessons learnt from communities in Somaliland may be useful in this regard (Ritchie 2017a).

¹⁸⁶ In terms of FGM, experiences from AMREF with other pastoralist groups such as the Masai have indicated 'remarkable gains' during FGM campaigns after they 'brought on board traditional structures' (Kenyan Woman 2015 'Legislations derail the fight against FGM', AWC).

Table 6.1: Understanding norm dynamics, local allies and counter pressures

Norms / barriers for Women and Girls	Allies in Change	Approaches and tools in change	Counter pressures
<p>NORMS THAT ARE CHANGING <i>Participation in education</i> <i>Participation in health</i> <i>Gender relations and decision-making</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained midwives • VSLAs • Charismatic women • Progressive elders • Local religious leaders • Local NGOs/CSOs • Local health centres • Media / local radio stations • Diaspora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education services • Local facilitated dialogue • Women and girls' network development e.g. VSLAs • Vocational training • Health and hygiene training • Women's Centres • Constitution • Koran • Local proverbs and laws • Community exchange and exposure visits • Technology (e.g. mobile phone) / innovation (e.g. water filters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative elders • Environmental degradation • Insecurity / conflict
<p>NORMS THAT ARE SHOWING MIXED TRENDS OF CHANGE <i>Early/arranged marriage</i> <i>Domestic and community violence</i> <i>Women's workloads</i></p>			
<p>NORMS THAT ARE SLOW TO CHANGE / MORE RESISTANT <i>FGM/C</i> <i>Women's control over productive assets (land, livestock, property, cash)</i></p>			

6.2 STRATEGIES FOR ACTION IN RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

In further promoting women and girls' development and empowerment, research respondents at all levels emphasized the further promotion of girls' education and extending VSLAs for women (and further increasing their capacity). Interestingly, men's groups also indicated the importance of adolescent girls boarding schools and women's non-formal education. Regionally, rural groups have highlighted other areas of support including having a place to study in the community (Kenya) and women's community centres (for training, justice support etc), fostering girls' leadership (Somaliland), and promoting girls in sports (South Sudan).

Whilst South Darfur still grapples with an insecure context, in the target research areas there has been a return to a semblance of peace. Moving beyond the paradigm of emergency and relief, the following recommendations build on some of the above community recommendations, as well as broader CARE studies on pastoralist women and girls in East Africa, and aim to further strengthen approaches to combating discriminatory social norms and barriers of rural women and girls in CIS's operational areas in Darfur. The various action points emphasize both identifying and drawing on both local and external change agents and stakeholders in supporting women and girls' empowerment and development, including the increased **role of diaspora**.

Intervention area	PRIORITY	ACTORS
I ACCESS TO/USE OF BASIC SERVICES (EDUCATION, HEALTH, LEGAL)		
1.1 Facilitate access to (quality) primary and secondary education (and participation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support local access to and participation in (quality) primary education, and explore new ways to promote secondary school attendance for both girls (and boys) through local mobilization, clubs and community/school campaigns for rural girls. Consider exploring Darfur diaspora financial support (school books and sanitary pads) and sourcing donor support for family incentives (e.g. food items) for very poor families (e.g. UNICEF). Lobby for urban boarding facilities. Consider exploring homework space at the community level for girls and boys (separately). 	HIGH	GOVT NGOS
1.2 Facilitate access to informal and tertiary education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local access to and participation in informal and tertiary education for women. For (early) dropout girls support access to basic literacy/numeracy courses, and vocational training. 	HIGH	GOVT NGOS
1.3 Facilitate access to health services / clinics and information (maternal health and family planning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local participation in health facilities for women for maternal health through maternal health/hygiene through community messaging with community health volunteers. 	HIGH	GOVT NGOS HEALTH WORKERS RADIO
1.4 Facilitate access to formal justice and legal services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of training in access to formal justice¹⁸⁷ related to sexual, marital and inheritance rights. Consider support for GAH Women's Centres and training of community paralegals (on legal processes related to family, divorce, rights). 	MEDIUM	GOVT NGOS
II LOCAL DIALOGUE, AND AWARENESS-RAISING		
2.1 Harness charismatic women / local role models for local social dialogue and household mobilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify local charismatic women that can champion and lead local social dialogue and action with women's groups, and support household/community mobilization efforts in areas such as harmful traditional practices (e.g. teenage marriage, FGM/C and domestic violence), school education and inheritance rights. 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL WOMEN LEADERS
2.2 Harness progressive leaders and religious representatives for local community awareness raising and action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify local charismatic leaders (from inside and outside of the community), and religious leaders that can slowly champion and promote new community attitudes and beliefs regarding multiple norms including: harmful traditional practices (FGM, arranged and underage marriages, domestic violence), secondary education, inheritance rights and a safe community environment, and a more holistic perspective of family well being. Facilitate local training and campaigns through leaders (using methods such as community theatre) to promote new attitudes and beliefs. 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL LEADERS
2.3 Facilitate exposure visits between different locations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate exposure visits between semi-urban communities and rural communities, particularly between progressive and less developed 	MEDIUM	NGOS LOCAL LEADERS

¹⁸⁷ For example, lessons could be learnt from ActionAid in Somaliland (Actionaid 2015).

Intervention area	PRIORITY	ACTORS
areas that can offer and share experiences and insights into how they tackled social barriers. Consider ‘twinning’ ¹⁸⁸ of villages (urban and rural) with same ethnic groups.		
III Social organization, and higher-level collective action		
3.1 Strengthen women’s networks/groups (e.g. health committees, VSLAs) and collective action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the further development of VSLAs as crucial women’s empowerment and community development bodies. In addition to savings/lending training for VSLAs, facilitate leadership training, foster ties between groups for higher-level collective action, and facilitate links to external services (legal and financial). 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL WOMEN LEADERS
3.2 Strengthen youth networks and enhance girls’ development through ‘AVSLAs’ and collective action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the potential development of girls’ adolescent VSLA (AVSLA) groups (under 20 years) as young women’s empowerment bodies that can start saving, and engage in social dialogue and action (perhaps through schools). They can also initiate productive, voluntary and self-help tasks. Facilitate strategic support to build the group capacity, and foster ties between different community groups for collective action at the location level. 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL WOMEN LEADERS
3.3 Facilitate women’s agricultural skills development and cooperatives in agro-pastoralist areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of women’s farmers’ groups/cooperatives at the community/location level, with possible links to VSLAs. Agencies should facilitate access to inputs, and encourage the joint marketing of premium produce. To strengthen the cooperative, agencies should facilitate training on organizational management, and the development of systems for joint input supply and marketing. 	MEDIUM	NGOS LOCAL WOMEN LEADERS
IV Local resources, environment, and technology		
4.1 Facilitate introduction to appropriate technologies to support access to clean water (during dry season) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing on CARE Somalia, explore water storage tanks and rainwater harvesting, and facilitate access to new local appropriate technologies, including improved (locally made) water filters (e.g. those designed by TEARFUND). Formulate a strategy for their production and distribution using market mechanisms (i.e. working with local town craftsmen). 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL CRAFTSMEN
4.2 Facilitate introduction to appropriate technologies to support fuel consumption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider introduction of more durable improved stoves that reduce fuel needs (e.g. those designed by the ENDEV¹⁸⁹). Formulate a strategy for their production and distribution using market mechanisms (i.e. working with local town craftsmen). 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL CRAFTSMEN
4.3 Support local strategy-making to support deteriorating local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a local level, support inter-community strategy making in environmental management to support access to firewood and security. 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL LEADERS GOVT

¹⁸⁸ This is a concept that has been used in various countries in Europe to develop stronger grassroots ties between the two countries. But it could also be interesting to discuss and possibly trial in urban and rural communities within countries in East Africa.

¹⁸⁹ Started in 2003, ENDEV is a global initiative between the Netherlands, Germany and Norway that aims to facilitate sustainable access to modern energy services and resource for poor people in developing countries. In Kenya, EnDEV has developed new improving cooking technologies and now established a dynamic market in the country, with over 1.3 million disseminated stoves (since 2005). Improved stoves for private households both save up to 60% of firewood, and reduce cooking time.

<i>Intervention area</i>	PRIORITY	ACTORS
V <i>Communications, and media</i>		
5.1 Support access to national/regional radio messaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to improve access to local radio stations – and use of mobile phones - with educational broadcasts, and support further education, health and rights messaging, talk shows and soap operas. 	HIGH	NGOS LOCAL RADIO STATION GOVT

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Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

I ASSIGNMENT BACKGROUND

As common in the Horn of Africa region, **pastoralism in Sudan** is a core way of life and means of livelihoods. CARE International's rural women programmes have focused on empowering women and marginalized groups. It is a long-term commitment to communities, a design methodology that encompasses cross cutting issues such as gender, conflict, disaster risk reduction (DRR), governance, civil society, and advocacy, as well as the development of a system to measure outputs, outcome and impact. The approach also entails close alliances with a limited number of strategic government and non-government partners.

In the Horn of Africa, CARE's rural women's programmes aim to improve the economic status of women and their households to reduce vulnerabilities caused by poverty, conflict and drought. The program supports the communities to access sustainable basic services like education, water and sanitation. The rural women programme's other approaches include use of women village and savings groups to improve access to savings; promotes inclusive governance to increase women participation and representation in decision process from community level upwards; prioritizes the girls' education to help girls become tomorrow's decision-makers and improve the ability of households and communities to pull themselves out of poverty. The programme also helps to foster peace and reduce the impact of natural resource degradation, which is critical for the survival of the pastoralist system in the Horn of Africa.

CARE's rural women's programme has taken a major focus on women and girls empowerment. Over the years since 2009, the program has had a number of initiatives that were in line with its overarching *Theory of Change*.

II ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVE / DELIVERABLES

The overall objective of the research is to contribute to CARE International's pastoral programme in East Africa, and the development of a causal model of pastoral resilience. Building on recent research in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and South Sudan (Ritchie 2015, 2016, 2017) and existing studies in Sudan, the scope of the Sudanese study covers selected pastoral communities from CARE Sudan's operational areas. The study focuses in particular on **pastoralist women and girls' social norms and barriers**. Using the initial framework developed in Ethiopia, the research aims to look at the Sudan reality of pastoralists to further contribute to understanding the changing nature of pastoralist societies (and gender) in East Africa, and to support the development of strategies that can best assist vulnerable groups such as pastoralist women and girls. In particular, the phenomenon of climate change is 'challenging norms and shifting the traditional barriers to change in gender relations' presenting new opportunities for 'linking adaptation with improved gender equality' (Joto Africa 2014).

To strengthen CARE's understanding of the status of pastoralist women and girls, the study specifically integrates people's current experiences, taking into account changing realities including diverse factors such as climate change as well as regional restrictions to pastoral movement, sedentarisation/urbanization (leading to the 'transitioning out of pastoralism' groups), the emerging disparity between rich and poor, and government

policies. In view of CARE's programming, the study took a special focus on adolescent girls as an impact group that CARE is keen to better understand in order to support more effectively. Findings from the research are envisaged to have cross-sectoral recommendations for future CARE programming in the Horn of Africa, and thus the study aimed to be sensitive to the full context of evolving pastoralist realities, situating social norms and barriers to women and girls' empowerment in the wider development context.

The study will be based on initial desk review of key documents, and then local field research with the CARE team (using a previously developed framework under CARE Ethiopia, with necessary adjustments). The research aims to contribute to the development of a pastoralist causal model for enhanced resilience to support CARE's ongoing and future projects. This work will also contribute to similar work that has been done under CARE in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and South Sudan by the same Consultant.

Specific Objectives:

- Review and analyze the documents relating to CARE's rural women program and its various initiatives
- Review recent documents on rural women initiatives especially past evaluations that can inform this study on social norms and barriers
- Based on desk review of internal and external documents identify specific gaps in knowledge or areas that need updating, and adapt, as needed, the framework for the field work on social norms/barriers of pastoralist women and girls¹⁹⁰
- Undertake field work, visiting communities, primarily talking to women and girls, as well as government officers, CARE project staff and other NGO staff, based on gaps identified by the literature review
- Write up findings and feed these back into a report as per specific deliverables section below.

The assignment should ideally be carried out over April-July 2018.

Deliverables

Presentation of initial findings (PowerPoint): in order to incorporate initial comments by CARE Sudan, the consultant will present the preliminary findings to CARE staff in Sudan, following the completion of the fieldwork, as with the previous studies in the region.

Draft report: Using a similar format to CARE studies in the region, the draft report will provide an analysis of social norms and barriers to women and girls' empowerment in dry land areas, identifying who the major gatekeepers are of the norms and values and where opportunities for change are. The report will also look into whether any of the programming to date has tackled the identified issues and if so what the general impact has been to date (although a full evaluation of previous programmes/projects will not be conducted).

For valuable comments and to ensure that the study meets the required quality, the consultant should submit the draft report to CARE Sudan for comments.

¹⁹⁰ Research methods were developed for earlier studies with CARE in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and South Sudan (Ritchie 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

The scope of the study covers approximately **10 (settled) community sites** in **3-4 pre-selected districts**¹⁹¹ in **one to two regions where CARE is operational**: South Darfur, East Darfur and/or South Kordofan. In strengthening CARE's understandings of the social norms and barriers women and girls' face, it is critically important that the study is based on people's current experiences and takes into account changing realities including factors such as climate change, regional restrictions to pastoral movement, land grabbing/privatization of land, sedentarisation/urbanization leading to the 'transitioning out of pastoralist' groups, emerging disparity between rich and poor, government policies and those of other stakeholders. The study will keep in mind the focus of CARE's program on adolescent girls as the impact group that we most need to understand and be able to support effectively. Finally the implication of the social norms and barriers are likely to have cross-sectoral recommendations in terms of future CARE programming and therefore the study needs to be sensitive to the full context of local realities, situating social norms and barriers to women and girls' empowerment in the wider development context.

The following describes the proposed activities and their duration over April 2018-July 2018 (total = 28 days):

Phase 1: Background desk research/preparation¹⁹² (4 days – April 2018)

In the first phase of the assignment, to better understand CARE International's work and background of pastoralist women and girls in selected regions in Sudan, the consultant will review all relevant internal and external documents provided by CARE in April 2018. The consultant will also refine/amend research methodologies as required.

Phase 2: Field mission (with travel) (14+1 days - May 2018)

In the second phase of the assignment, the consultant will travel to CARE's office in Sudan and two selected provinces. The consultant will conduct 2 days of preparation/training on the field mission with relevant staff/research team members. The consultant will discuss and agree with CARE staff the (3-4) districts of focus and the key issues that may need particular attention in the Sudanese context, the planned approach/methods, and field visit details.

Methods/approach

Field visits to both areas will then aim to gather first hand quantitative and qualitative information. Using techniques developed for the earlier social norms and barriers studies in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and South Sudan (Ritchie 2015, 2016, 2017), methodologies will include key informant interviews, focus group discussions as well as innovative self-designed PRA sessions (consultant); and the gathering of key quantitative data, as discussed with CARE (with support of CARE field staff). The research will specifically take a three-pronged approach to the fieldwork including targeting the *sub-district* (cluster of villages) as a core focus of the research, in addition

¹⁹¹ Pre-selected in pre-fieldwork workshop.

¹⁹² Due to earlier studies in Ethiopia and Kenya that fleshed out the framework for the study and methods, an initial inception report will not be drafted for this study (as with the second Kenyan study). Please refer to Ritchie 2015b, 2016 for the overall research framework / approach.

to the *NGO and institutional/government* levels. The research will include a total of 3-4 districts over the target areas in Sudan.

Using qualitative research tools, the practical research will gather specific information at both sub-district and district level, with selected quantitative indicators collected to gauge 'change and range'. Tools will include key informant interviews, focus group discussions (with innovative ethnographic exercises), semi-structure interviews and observation. A total of 30 focus group/PRA discussions will be held with 8-12 participants per group. This will include 10 focus groups with adolescent girls, 10 focus groups with women (local community members and representatives) and 10 focus group discussions with men (local leaders and community members), in addition to several case study interviews (with adolescents). Beyond the community, single/group key informant interviews will be conducted with local NGO staff, and local government representatives. The research will aim to capture and emphasize '*change and range*' in key norms related to pastoralist women and girls to draw attention to both change and the spectrum of specific rules/practices at the local level.

Thematic framework of research focus, and ethnic groups

In all 4 countries that have been included in the CARE research (Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somaliland), a basic framework was used to study a selected range of norms / practices of women and girls, and CHANGE: 'rapid social analysis'. This has included:

- FGM
- Marital practices
- Gender based violence, including wife battery and sexual assault (and access to justice)
- Women and girls' domestic chores: access to water and firewood
- Women's control over (and access to) assets and productive resources (including livestock, land and cash)
- Gender relations and decision-making
- Participation in basic services: education and maternal health (practices and use of services)

Appendix 2: Research methods

As with earlier studies conducted by the consultant with CARE in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland, and South Sudan, qualitative research techniques included community-level **focus group discussions** (incorporating ethnographic techniques), **semi-structured interviews** and **case studies** in addition to observation. The primary focus of the research was at the *village level* with respondents comprising groups of women, adolescent girls and men (example of question guide for the *Adolescent Group Tool* below¹⁹³, with variations on similar/additional questions as relevant for the men's and women's group). These qualitative tools (with quantitative indicators) were used by the three research teams as a basic guide to open discussions. At the county and national level, the research also investigated NGOs and government institutions in terms of policies and programmes, ongoing local projects, and perspectives on selected norms and change for women and girls in target locations.

Tool 2A: Focus Group / ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Respondents: Community adolescent girls (8-12/group)

Location:.....

Date:.....

- Thank you for meeting us today.
- We are coming from CARE office, and we are doing some research on the community situation to better understand any social change since the 'displacement' (2003), particularly related to women and girls
- My name is, and, and we would like to ask you some questions today to better know your community - as key adolescent girl representatives - and areas of CHANGE.
- There are no right or wrong answers, so please share your thoughts/ideas with us!
- Before we start can we take your name and some basic details?

List of adolescent girl attendees:

First name	Age	Marital status (S/M/D) / children?	School attendance/Level?
1.			
2.			
3.			

¹⁹³ Note the format is shortened.

4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			

*Discussion Guide*¹⁹⁴

1. (Warming up group) Let us talk a bit about your COMMUNITY SITUATION, AND the lives of adolescent girls.

*Q. Describe the **situation of your community/location** – water resources, markets...*

*Q. Is the community **peaceful / settled**? Did they **migrate** from somewhere else – because of conflict? Drought? Other reasons?*

*Q. How is life for **adolescent girls** here?*

(Good things? Challenges?)

¹⁹⁴ Note: format has been reduced in length for this report (spaces removed).

2. Let us now talk more about some traditional practices in your community, and CHANGE since the 'displacement', particularly for women and girls (discuss/use illustrations):

a) Let us start with **DOMESTIC CHORES and daily workloads** (SHOW CARDS 2a)

Q. Who is typically **responsible** for jobs such as collecting water & firewood?

Q. How many **hours** do you spend collecting these? **Is it getting worse/better??**

* **WATER collection**- time spent/day, and LOCATION

Now.....Before.....

* **FIREWOOD collection** – time spent/week, and LOCATION

Now.....Before.....

Q. What do you think of this? Are there changes to these chores such as help from boys or men? Why?

b) Secondly, we will discuss traditional customs such as FGM... (SHOW CARD 2b)

Q. Is **FGM a common practice here in your community?**

Q. Out of 10 adolescent girls in the community, **how many** are having FGM done?

Now.....Before.....

Q. At what **age** is it common to have the FGM conducted?

Now.....Before.....

Q. Whose **decision** is this?

Q. What do you think of this? Are there changes to these practices? Why?

c. Thirdly, let us look at traditional and current MARITAL PRACTICES (SHOW CARD 2c)

Q. What **age** do girls typically get married in this community?

Now.....Before.....

Q. Who do girls marry – boys, older men?

Q. In this group, are you married / getting married?

Q. What is the typical **process for marriage** and **bride price** (arranged/choice)?

Q. Out of 10, how many girls have their **marriage arranged** (by their father)

Now.....Before.....

Q. What do you think of this? Are there changes to these above practices? Why? (Experiences to share...?)

d. Fourthly, we will discuss issues related to FAMILY DISCIPLINE, and COMMUNITY BEHAVIOUR (SHOW CARD 2d)

Q. Do women and girls experience any **types of ‘discipline’**?

Q. Has this changed since the displacement?

Q. When do you think is it justified for a husband to beat his wife or children?

Q. Outside of the community, do women or girls experience any other problems from community/non-community members, for example when collecting firewood? Is this common?

Q. What do you think of this? Are there changes to these above practices? Why? (For example, people are changing because of the law?)

3. **Let us now talk about the introduction of new services, and again, change since the beginning of the crisis, particularly on women and girls**

a) **Here we can start with EDUCATION....(SHOW CARD 3a)**

Q. Do girls in this community attend **primary school**?

Now.....(out of 10).....Before.....(out of 10)

Q. Do adolescent girls attend **secondary school**? Do you attend secondary school?

Now.....(out of 10).....Before.....(out of 10)

Q. What do you think of this? Are there changes? Why? (Experiences to share....?)

b) **A second area of services is MATERNAL HEALTH ... (SHOW CARD 3b)**

Q. Do girls in this community use the clinic for **maternal health** support? Is the **use of family planning** common?

Q. How many girls **visit the clinic** for tests before (in pregnancy) and after birth?

Now.....(out of 10).....Before.....(out of 10)

Q. Are there **special foods** that pregnant mothers eat, or avoid?

Q. Is '**exclusive**' **breastfeeding** common - until what the baby is how old?

Q. What do you think of this? Are there changes to these practices? Why?

4. **Who is best supporting POSITIVE CHANGE and EMPOWERMENT for women and girls (through for example, direct messages, guidance of the people, skills building)?**

Q. WHICH GROUP/PEOPLE/OTHER have been most influential and WHY (e.g. elders, religious places, women from VSLA, school teachers, government, NGO, radio): EXPLAIN!

Q. Which type of TRAINING Or MESSAGES have been the most useful or relevant for supporting girls/women?

5. **How has change (such as new schools and VSLAs) influenced the treatment and status of women and girls, and changed their lives in your community?**

(e.g. women and girls' roles, status, respect, or access to opportunities)

6. **What are your IDEAS on further promoting women and girls' empowerment and development?**

What LOCAL RESOURCES/ORGANISATIONS can further support change in girls/women's development?

Appendix 3: Research Respondents/ Relevant Groups Met (May-July 2018)

	NAME /GROUP	DATE	LOCATION	ORGANISATION/POSITION
1	Nina Farnworth	May 6	Khartoum	CIS Funding Coordinator
2	Sara Azhari Mohammed Imam	May 7	Khartoum	CIS Technical staff
3	Baha Ahmed Sharief Adjaratou Fatou Ndiaye	May 7	Khartoum	UN WOMEN
4	Nayla Abushura	May 8	Khartoum	Plan International
5	Tomoko Ono	May 9	Khartoum	Jica
6	Khalid Awad Mohammed ImamHago Dr. Manal	May 10	Khartoum	Ministry of Health <i>Reproductive Health</i>
7	Romissa Adam Yousef Alhaj	May 10	Khartoum	Global Aid Hand <i>Programme Officers</i>
8	Mariam Ali	May 10	Khartoum	Ministry of Social Welfare Director - Centre for Women's Human Rights
9	Abeer Abdulsalaam Ali Elhabib Hamdok	May 10	Khartoum	UNFPA Reproductive Health Program Officer
10	Nimat Kuku Abeer Majour	May 10	Khartoum	Gender Centre for Research and Studies Co-Founder, Prog. Manager
11	Delphine Marie	July 11	Khartoum	EU Governance Coordinator
12	Ranjita Mohanty (and colleagues)	July 11	Khartoum	UNDP / Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund
13	Yousef Ahmed	July 11	Khartoum	UNDP (Access to Justice)
14	Ulrich Tobias Muller Nemtalla Shawgi	July 12	Khartoum	Swiss Embassy Counselor Gender Focal Point
15	Felip Helland	July 12	Khartoum	Swedish Embassy Representative
16	Sanosi Adam	July 12	Khartoum	360 Africa (media) Consultant

	NAME /GROUP	DATE	LOCATION	ORGANISATION/POSITION
17	Mohammed Ali	July 14	Nyala	CIS Head of Office
18	Draib el Reigh <i>Women's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Men's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Adolescent Group (8-12)</i>	July 15	Belil	Community members and key representatives
19	Geldy <i>Women's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Men's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Adolescent Group (8-12)</i>	July 15	Belil	Community members and key representatives
20	Musra Musa Ali Sara Mustafa	July 15	Nyala	Department of Social Welfare Chair of Women and Families
21	Isra Yousif	July 15	Nyala	NGO worker (independent) Translator
22	Asadig Abdullah Mohammed Abdullah Musa Abdul Rahman Mohammed Musa	July 15	Nyala	Jebbra Organisation Ashrook Organisation Amal Darfur
23	Khalid Tahir Mubarak Mohamed	July 15	Nyala	UNICEF
24	Salih Khulum Salam	July 15	Nyala	Global Aid Hand <i>Programme Officer</i>
25	Sister Khala	July 15	Nyala	Ministry of Health Head Midwife / Trainer
26	Jimaiza Kamara <i>Women's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Men's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Adolescent Group (8-12)</i>	July 16	Kass	Community members and key representatives
27	Tanakaro <i>Women's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Men's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Adolescent Group (8-12)</i>	July 17	Kass	Community members and key representatives
28	Haja Mohammad Salih	July 17	Kass	CIS VSLA Officer
29	Abdul R. Joda	July 17	Kass	CIS WASH Officer / Acting Head

	NAME /GROUP	DATE	LOCATION	ORGANISATION/POSITION
30	Adam Jeddo	July 19	Nyala	Ministry of Education Head Belil Locality
31	Jeddo Omar	July 19	Kass	CIS Logistics and Security Officer
32	Asim Alhady	July 19	Nyala	CIS EVC Officer / Economic Empowerment Area Manager
33	Sabrin Ibrahim Fatima Adam	July 20	Nyala	Head of Women's Union VC Women's Union, MP South Darfur
34	Dr. Magda Ahmed	July 20-22	Nyala	CIS External Consultant
35	Mohammed Dahab	July 21	Nyala	Local teacher
36	Al Salaam IDP camp Site 1 <i>Women's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Men's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Adolescent Group (8-12)</i>	July 21	Belil	Community members and key representatives
37	Al Salaam IDP camp Site 2 <i>Women's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Men's Group (8-12)</i> <i>Adolescent Group (8-12)</i>	July 21	Belil	Community members and key representatives

Appendix 4: Research limitations

Limitations included the thematic scope of the study. Using an initial framework developed in Ethiopia, selected social norms were pre-identified and examined with view to understanding socio-cultural barriers and change for (agro)pastoralist women and girls, in vein with earlier CARE studies (Ritchie 2015b, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). The CARE studies have aimed to complement other more livelihoods-oriented pastoralist research in the Horn of Africa that has taken a more economics focus.¹⁹⁵ In generating a broad picture of women and girls' changing lives in target areas in South Darfur, specific norms of attention included **harmful and traditional practices** (e.g. FGM, early marriage), the **weight of domestic chores, women's decision-making and access to resources**, and **participation in education** (primary and secondary), and brief insights into *maternal health*. In the context of Darfur and government sensitivities, the framework was only able to touch very lightly on *gender-based violence*. The research also touched on access to both informal and formal justice but did not look in detail at specific cases. In better understanding change in both village-level justice and the use of local courts by women, specific cases warrant further investigation.

Secondly, limitations also include the geographical scope of the fieldwork. The research drew on two localities: Belil and Kass, including 4 cluster settlements (mostly Fur areas, with one community in Kass that was Arab nomadic within a dominant Fur settlement zone) and 2 IDP sites. Yet the research aimed to deliberately include communities with different degrees of remoteness, and thus offer an evolving picture of the norms and trends within the target areas, with insights into more challenging realities further from the towns. The main focus group research did not include urban areas, although town trends and dynamics were touched upon with staff and key informants (in particular in Nyala and Kass town).

Thirdly, in terms of the research process at the community level, the focus group (FG) meetings varied across the groups, and across rural and urban realities. Three local research assistants and one CARE senior staff member supported the consultant in conducting the focus groups in the target communities. In the *women's FGs* (led by the consultant), the quality and level of the meeting was moderated by the women's level of education, NGO exposure and composition of group, with the participation of local women leaders enhancing the scope of the discussion.¹⁹⁶ For the *adolescent FGs*, meetings proved to be varied, with girls shy, particularly in more remote areas, with less experience of such discussions. This meant that sometimes gathering girls' experiences, attitudes and perspectives (and stories) on practices and change was sometimes difficult (compared to regions such as northern Kenya) although the experienced CARE staff member led this discussion. Finally, supported by two local male enumerators, the *men's FGs* and case studies emerged to be a good complement to both of the female FGs in their elaboration of the micro-context and in the general prevalence of practices. Yet in describing and fleshing out deeper attitudes and perspectives, their written notes were extremely weak (the capacity of the male team members to both probe topics and capture and write up

¹⁹⁵ This includes recent research on pastoralist women's evolving livelihoods and value chain development in Ethiopia (Ritchie 2015a), and women's engagement in pastoral value chains in Northern Kenya (CARE Kenya 2014).

¹⁹⁶ As in South Sudan and contrasting to earlier research in neighbouring countries (including Somaliland, and Kenya), women were more cautious to make any negative comments / judgments about men or community elders, particularly in the analysis exercise of 'actors' influencing change processes. In rating the men's involvement in women and girls' empowerment, women often were afraid to give them low scores 'in case they are watching'.

qualitative descriptions was challenged by their limited experiences in carrying out such exploratory research despite pre-research training). The oral accounts by the male enumerators were more illuminating but still fairly poor, compared to previous research in the region. Across all of the target communities, unfortunately the team was under significant *time pressure*, often due to logistical delays but also because of the requests of the accompanying security forces – more so than the other research missions. Despite planning for 2-hour focus group sessions, in several villages, the final stages of our meetings were often rushed.

Finally, in terms of the investigation of the character of the norms themselves, it is critical to highlight the locally specific, and chaotic nature of local norms, and the challenge in firmly defining their scope and boundaries. This meant that there was sometimes a lack of consistency in the findings, and contradictory statements. Norms were also shown to be evolving at different paces, due to a variety of driving factors with some changing faster than others. The research aimed to capture and emphasize **'change and range'** to draw attention to both change and the spectrum of specific rules/practices at the local level, and importantly, *trends in their dynamics*. The research also paid special attention to different *perspectives* on norms, *changing beliefs* and *local attitudes* across different community groups. The research aimed to create a broad picture of change, and to **identify areas for potential follow up**, where necessary.

As with the research in neighbouring countries, change over time in norms was measured using a key landmark date approximately 5-10 years prior to the research. In Sudan, the **'time of displacement' or 10-15 years ago** was deemed to be the most suitable choice (i.e. 2003) to discuss the change in practices over a tangible period, particularly with major disruption and change since this time. For the adult groups at the community level, the change in community life was possible to discuss, albeit this still difficult to recollect. Yet in the context of Darfur, such discussions/comparisons were further challenged by a complex set of dynamics over this turbulent period (arguably more so than in other regions in this Horn of Africa research). For the adolescent groups, they were asked to indicate the experiences of much older siblings. **In general, rather than trying to collect exact figures/details from the past, the aim of the research was really to explore trends including the direction and scope of change today, and key precipitators of change over the past 15 years.** Other key informants working in communities (e.g. NGO workers, officials) were also crucial in unraveling change over time in target research areas.

Case 1: Young married woman, 21 years old in Geldi, Belil

I am 21 years old, and live in Geldi village. I was circumcised at 7 years old and I had the 'sunna' version. I recovered after 4 days. FGM is not a good practice because it creates problems when you give birth and can affect the health situation of girls...I intend not to practice it for my own girl children although if the tradition continues, I will need to [conform]....

After finishing secondary school (19 years olds), I married by my own choice, to the husband of my choice with same education as me, and he paid the dowry (500 SDG) and bought other items including clothes, perfumes and shoes for me....There has been a bit of change over the past 20 years because the village has now agreed to simplify the marriage process and pay only 500 SDG which is affordable to all young men. Girls are also more aware about the economic situation and accept what their husband can pay. The second change is the possibility for girls to select their own husbands, and girls are [now] more educated and can be responsible for this choice.

The drop out of girls from school is high due to co-education, and economic factors (school expense). But there is also still limited interest and awareness of parents in girls' education. Other families may lack mothers, and girls are expected to assume this role looking after the family [and her siblings]. There has not been much change in girls' education in our village as we still face such problems and we have a lack of secondary schools here.

My husband and I now have one child (girl). We are both farmers, and we cultivate 3 *makhamas* and cultivate sorghum, groundnuts and watermelons. We sell our produce on the market and also use some of produce for home consumption...

I use the clinic for example to take children for vaccination but I don't know much about family planning although I would be interested in this (I only know the 'traditional ways' of breastfeeding to stop getting pregnant). I am breastfeeding my baby until they are 24 months old...

In our home, I haven't experienced any domestic violence during our two years of marriage. I know two women that are beaten and accept this practice but it is never justified. It is very rare to find women going outside the village to seek justice as this is considered such a shame. Family and intimate problems should be solved at the village level by the elders...

Today there is some improvement in women and girls' lives due to some girls going to secondary education (out of the village), the establishment of VSLAs, radio and the mobile phone –the latter allows us to communicate with people inside and outside the community. Mobiles are increasing our communication and VSLAs are boosting our

confidence and giving women access to assets. To further empower women and girls, we now need education for all girls and boys, more opportunity for social interaction (between rural and urban areas), more communication (radio, mobiles), women training centres and more awareness raising on girls' education...

Case 2: Married adolescent girl in the IDP camp, Al Salaam

I am 19 years old, and have been living in Al Salaam Camp for the past eight years. I was circumcised by the local traditional midwife [before marriage] but I did not experience any problems because I was lucky to have '*sunna*'. Now we don't have 'FGM' [as before] and this is healthier and better for giving birth....

I was married by my own choice (to the husband of my choice) at 16, and he paid the dowry (1,500 SDG) and other extra costs....I dropped out of school (primary level 7) due to this marriage in addition to local conflict and displacement issues, and our [home] economic situation. There was also a lack awareness of our parents of [girls'] education. Now there are in fact more schools at the camp, including primary and secondary. I have one sister and 8 brothers. One of my brothers is now at university...

My husband and I now have one child (2 years old). I know about family planning (for example the injection) but I don't practice this, as [such methods] are only used if you don't want to get pregnant. I breastfed my baby until he was 24 months old.

My husband and I are both farmers, and we rent around 3-4 *makhamas* and cultivate sorghum, vegetables and groundnuts. We have no livestock. In the summer months, my husband works as a trader.

In our home, my husband occasionally beats me 'for improvement of my behaviour'...this is justified but it would be good if there was an alternative. Yet the violence [in the community] is not like it was before.. I don't know of any women or girls seeking justice ...

Today, there is some improvement in women and girls' lives due to education, health and sanitation campaigns, and awareness about maternal and child health (e.g. vaccinations). To further boost women and girls lives, we need electricity (to watch TV and listen to the radio), kindergarten, religious education, better school environments (seating, supplies, books), improved access to water and improved fuel stoves...

This appendix further elaborates on critical gender dynamics in pastoralist societies.

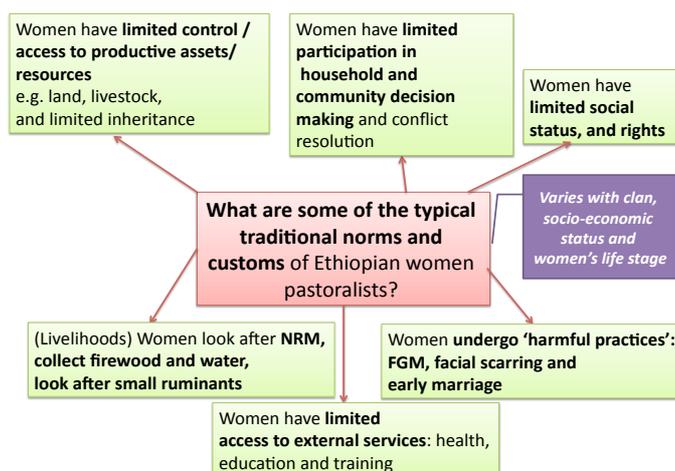
A4.1 Gender dynamics in agro-pastoralist societies¹⁹⁷

In exploring agro-pastoral women's marginalized situation in society, it is evident that a complex confluence of socio-cultural dynamics, environmental pressures and institutional weaknesses shape women/girls' roles, choices and opportunities. In the context of Ethiopia, the *Ethiopian Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs* elaborates on the myriad social, economic and political challenges faced by pastoralist and agro-pastoralist women (2011). Socially, women tend to suffer from a low educational background (with a low rates of enrollment of girls in school), the persistence of harmful traditional practices (such as FGC and early marriage), a lack of family planning (due to traditional beliefs/practices), a lack of access to adequate maternal health facilities, gender based violence, a lack of assets, in addition to access to appropriate tools/equipment (e.g. in productive work). Economically, women face challenges from increasing land degradation, influencing the availability of fodder for cattle and access to water (for human and livestock); limited irrigation for farming; a lack of land rights; poor access to animal health services (and thus limited knowledge of modern cattle breeding); and a lack of alternative income generating options (and access to micro-credit). Politically, agro-pastoralist women also remain excluded, in part since local leadership still often has limited awareness of the human and democratic rights of women. Women are also constrained by their own limited awareness of their 'constitutional rights', limited participation in local forums and a lack of capacity to protect/uphold the 'multi-diversified rights of women'. Women are also affected by their lack of ability to properly participate in conflict resolution, and the (ongoing) lack of coherence between 'modern' structures e.g. ward, location and traditional structures.

From a sociological perspective, agro-pastoralist women and girls' norms, customs and entitlements are essentially shaped by paternalistic socio-cultural ideas, values and attitudes about gender-related roles and responsibilities (*see Figure A4.1*). These include women's expected roles as homemakers, and child bearers/carers. For women, these include: their **limited participation in household and community decision-making (and conflict resolution)**; their **limited control over productive assets and resources** (e.g. land and livestock); their **high domestic responsibilities** including collecting firewood and water (as well as their role in looking after small ruminants and NRM); and their **limited access to external services** (health and education). Women may also be subjected to **harmful traditional practices** including facial scarring, FGM and early/arranged marriage.

¹⁹⁷ This is derived from Ritchie (2015).

Figure A4.1: Traditional norms and customs of women pastoralists



Source: Ritchie (2015b)

Appendix 7: General regional trends and dynamics affecting agro-pastoralism

There are a number of positive and negative trends and dynamics that are influencing rural lives in the Horn of Africa, in particular those of women and girls. This appendix expands on some of these trends including: the environmental pressures on pastoralism, women's engagement in non-traditional livelihoods, and social organization/women's participation in VSLAs.

A5.1 Environmental pressures on pastoralism: climate and resources

As described in the report, traditional pastoral livelihoods in East Africa are being strained by climatic change and drought, in addition to more man-made pressures such as the development of commercial farms, leading to decreasing quality and quantity of rangeland. Going beyond just 'production', pastoralism is argued to be a 'way of life' and 'a culture' (Markasis 2004). Yet managing both cultural as well as economic change may be the major challenge of the future. In exploring pastoralist livelihoods, it is pertinent to examine the unpredictable context of dryland ecosystems, and appreciate pastoralism as an evolved and fluid, but precarious livelihood. Traditionally, pastoralists keep livestock – goats, sheep, cattle, donkeys and camels – for both food, and as livelihood assets (wealth, and income from animal products). Whilst livestock is viewed as the 'central pillar' in pastoralist communities (Flintan 2007), the 'non-livestock sources' i.e. the use and management of natural resources is critical to their survival. Pastoralists depend on rangeland resources, including water, firewood, wild plants/grasses and grazing land, with great variation in time and space (CARE Kenya 2014). Drought was once a periodic phenomenon that occurred once every ten years. Now occurring every 2-3 years, it is leading to asset losses and resource depletion.

A5.2 Agro-Pastoral women's engagement in non-traditional livelihoods

With strains on traditional livelihoods, pastoralists in East Africa are thus 'increasingly looking beyond livestock to other means of generating income in order to diversify their livelihoods and spread risk'. Women are described to be at the 'centre' of these emerging 'non-traditional livelihood' endeavours, with uncertain socio-economic and cultural consequences in terms of the positive/negative impact on household economies and relations, and local culture. Non-livestock livelihood options are considered to depend on gender, marital status, location and wealth (Flintan 2007). Women may be limited by mobility, access to resources, cultural/religious constraints and the nature of the task. Pastoral women's diversification efforts may be further constrained by a lack of skills, ideas or ability to innovate; and credit. Women's decision-making and control over even small income sources may further depend on the household and livelihood situation.

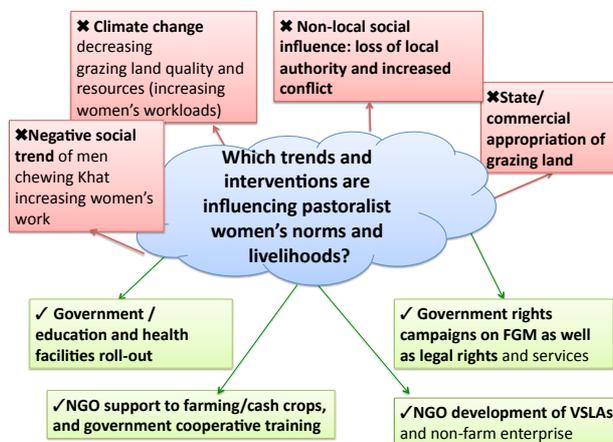
Non-traditional (commercial) pastoralist activities have included the farming of cash crops, such as maize and onions (new) often supported by NGOs; engagement in wage labour (Amibara in Afar); and for women, the increasingly popular, petty trading (often as a result of women's Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA) initiatives). In Borana in Ethiopia, non-traditional activities may include the sell of fuel wood and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) including gums and resins, honey and beeswax, and wild foods including fruits, nuts and spices (Flintan 2007a:). Whilst these non-livestock livelihood activities have been liberating in generating new norms (farming is more gender equal), some women complain of increased workloads and a loss of cultural

support systems (Flintan 2007b: 21). Yet others describe their increased mobility in being able to leave the house (ibid), and increased control over income (Flintan 2007b: 30).

A5.3 Social organization and women’s participation in VSLAs

As key instigators of change, VSLAs have been powerful tools towards facilitating women’s (culturally acceptable) socio-economic development, in strengthening women’s capacity (in managing money/savings), boosting women’s confidence to be household/community contributors, and fostering new social bonds amongst women. VSLAs have been described as a crucial ‘women’s development intervention’, influencing women’s social and economic life. In particular, VSLAs have triggered female involvement in **petty trading endeavours**, and increased **participation in decision-making** at the household level and in community forums, changing local (traditional) attitudes and practices through activism.

Figure A6.1: External positive/negative trends influencing pastoralist women’s lives



Appendix 8: Author background

Dr. Holly Ritchie is currently a research fellow at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University, The Hague, NL and part-time lecturer, with a strong interest in gender, norms and social change in economic development in fragile environments. Her PhD (awarded in 2013 at ISS, Erasmus University (Cum Laude); Best PhD Thesis 2013) focused on (grassroots) women's enterprise in Afghanistan and institutional change (*Institutional Innovation and Change in Value Chain Development: Negotiating Tradition, Power and Fragility in Afghanistan*, UK: Routledge (2016)). Recent academic research (2014, 2017) includes studies with Somali women entrepreneurs in fragile refugee situations in urban Kenya (*Rethinking Entrepreneurship in Fragile Environments: Lessons Learnt in Somali Women's Enterprise, Human Security and Inclusion*), and with Syrian women in Jordan (*Uncertain Livelihoods in Refugee Environments: Between Risk and Tradition for Syrian Refugee Women in Jordan*).

Based out of Kenya, Dr. Ritchie also works as a development consultant focusing on gender, enterprise/value chains and livelihood security in Afghanistan and East Africa. She has extensive practical development experience in community development, food security, enterprise and value chains in Afghanistan (10 years), as well as Brazil and East Africa. She conducted research for **CARE Ethiopia** (Ritchie 2015b) on social norms/barriers of pastoralist women and girls in Afar and Borana in Ethiopia, **CARE Kenya** (Ritchie 2016) on pastoralist women and girls in Marsabit in Kenya, **CARE Somalia** (Ritchie 2017a) on pastoralist women and girls in Sool and Sanaag in Somaliland, and **CARE South Sudan** (Ritchie 2017b) on pastoralist women and girls in Jonglei and Eastern Equatoria in South Sudan. She also conducted an earlier study on pastoralist women and evolving livelihoods/value chain engagement and resilience in Afar, Ethiopia (Ritchie 2015a). She has consulted for several different development agencies and government ministries in Afghanistan (conducting research, evaluations and training). Drawing on her PhD research, she contributed a chapter on value chains and institutions in the book, *Snapshots of an Intervention: The Unlearned Lessons of Afghanistan's Decade of Assistance (2001–11)* (Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2012). She also drafted a three-part paper series entitled 'Poorer Women in Business in Afghanistan' (Harakat, DFID, 2011). Further to this, she has written broader research papers on food security in Afghanistan (Oxfam Novib, 2011), and has been involved with several research publications on value chains, including medicinal/wild plants (FAO, 2010); potatoes (Solidarites 2008); almonds, carpets and melons (Afghan Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, 2008). She has published key aid effectiveness policy papers (Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, 2006).