



# Building Local, Just, and Inclusive Conflict Resolution

Conflicts in Darfur are escalating, with eight times more people killed and displaced in 2021 than in 2020. The complex situation and political, land use, and gender drivers of conflict make it all the more critical to invest in community-driven conflict resolution that supports equal results for everyone. The [Gender-Sensitive Conflict Analysis in South and East Darfur States, Sudan](#) highlights several groups as potential avenues to strengthen peacebuilding and resolve conflicts. In the 8 villages this research covers, community members say that inclusive community-based conflict resolution mechanisms are reducing conflict.

Respondents in every village reported knowing many tribes co-existing peacefully without conflict. In fact, apart from the non-state actor-controlled areas, they believed that all other communities peacefully co-existed. They said that peaceful co-existence can be attributed to:

- An agreed-upon collaborative approach to conflict resolution
- Signing of honor charts against aggression and protection against criminals
- Strong community-based governance systems that punish perpetrators
- Acceptance of each other and mutual respect
- Effective co-management of the available resources
- Cooperation in economic activities and collective livelihood groups
- Marriages across tribes and other social ties
- Presence of the government in the villages
- Use of Al-Fazza, a traditional system through which the community helps an individual in danger
- Contribution of Al-Naffir, a traditional system whereby people work collectively to help an individual in need (e.g., constructing a home, digging water sources, etc.)
- Establishment of village savings and loans associations

This research draws from 20 focus groups and 20 Key Informant Interviews that represent the views of 193 people (45% of whom were women) in eight villages in July of 2022. It also looks at 44 secondary sources.

## Groups that promote peace

### **Community based structures are the fairest option for women.**

Community-Based Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (CBCRMs) are local mechanisms usually formed by (I)NGOs for primarily intra-community conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and social cohesion. They follow the guidelines of local governance structures, as well as traditional customs and practices. They work to manage issues and conflict within a community between families and neighbors, developing resolution strategies with opposing parties and translating them into action plans. Women cite CBCRMs as one of the most diverse and best options for them to pursue justice. They are the only formal structures in most communities where women hold leadership roles. CBCRMs are more likely to include women, youth, people with disabilities, and a diverse representation of tribal identities. Their diversity and mission to build cohesion are part of their strength, and all community members are highly satisfied with them. CBCRMs also mesh well with formal systems. In the words of one military investigator,

“The **accessibility** of the CBCRMs is based on the fact that committee members are members of the communities in which they are living. They also live under the same condition as the people they serve and therefore, it is **easy to access them** at home or in the market to share concerns and problems **without spending a single Sudanese pound.**”

*“The formal justice system usually welcomes efforts to promote and develop the informal justice system to increase access to justice and rule of law, complementing the role of the government in restoring peace and stability.”*

- Military Investigator

**Savings groups as a peacebuilding approach.** Savings groups, also called Village saving and loan associations (VSLAs), were mentioned by multiple respondent groups from Alkherwi, Gabra, Sarhan, and Umlayouna as being an effective approach to peacebuilding. They share that VSLAs bring women from different backgrounds together to establish social and economic interdependence, which helps them to interact and learn to accept each other. They feel these associations create safe platforms for women to get involved in decision making and gain life skills. Women’s economic empowerment influences their public participation by strengthening their personal agency and confidence, influencing public opinion about their capabilities and leadership potential, and by disrupting

power imbalances within the home to give them more autonomy. Women in VSLAs were believed to be more powerful with the ability to wield more influence. Economic empowerment of women is also a core element of the gender and peacebuilding work of many civil society groups. Civil society projects promote a livelihood approach to peacebuilding, leveraging economic interdependence to bring together diverse communities to produce and sell outputs. Some examples are youth farmer groups, VSLAs, and other income generation activities. Respondents also mentioned that development projects by international and local NGOs have all influenced the shifting norms of women’s economic inclusion, especially through VSLA formation and support.

**Civil Society groups and NGOs.** Civil society actors from (I)NGOs to local CSOs and community groups are present in the villages and have an influence on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. They are working on topics including gender equality, GBV prevention, strengthening community structures. INGOs and local NGOs work on peacebuilding initiatives through raising community awareness and capacity strengthening. They utilize interventions such as workshops on peaceful co-existence; collaborating with stakeholders including the Native Administration, community leaders, religious leaders, and community-based governance structures to uncover the root causes of conflicts and coordinate activities in resolving them; and disseminating a peace culture through activities that bring people together. They are involved in strengthening capacities of the community, community leaders, CBCRMs, and natural resources management committees on conflict resolution and peace building in response to the different types of violence facing vulnerable groups. At times, they also form CBCRMs. Some engage in hands-on activities such as demarcating livestock migratory routes and stopover areas as a means to prevent conflict.