

Sudan's Youth and the Transition: Priorities, Perceptions and Attitudes

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK: OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY	10
<i>Introduction and Objectives.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Limitations of the Survey</i>	<i>14</i>
BACKGROUND: YOUTH IN SUDAN’S REVOLUTION AND TRANSITION.....	15
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	18
<i>Profile of the Youth-Led Organizations and Resistance Committees Mapped and Surveyed</i>	<i>18</i>
OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS	19
PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MAIN TOPICS IN THE TRANSITION	21
<i>Views of the Transitional Period Overall.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Views of the Constitutional Charter</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Satisfaction with the Transitional Government</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Views on the Economy and Basic Services</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Increasing Youth Engagement in the Transitional Process</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Will the Future be Better?.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Views on Current Challenges Faced by Youth</i>	<i>31</i>
ATTITUDES TOWARD PEACE, CONFLICT, AND THE JUBA PEACE AGREEMENT	33
<i>Views on the Centrality of Peace</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Knowledge and Views of the Juba Peace Agreement</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Views of the Government’s Peacemaking Efforts and the JPA</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Attitudes Toward Transitional Justice and Accountability.....</i>	<i>35</i>
ATTITUDES TOWARD DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES	37
<i>Attitudes Toward Elections</i>	<i>39</i>
SURVEYED YOUTHS’ PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN AND GENDER-RELATED ISSUES	40
OPINIONS ON PRIORITIES DURING THE TRANSITION	40
<i>Youth, Access to Information, and Capacity-Building for Advocacy</i>	<i>42</i>
CONCLUSION: ENHANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN THE TRANSITION.....	44
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	46
ANNEX 1 – PROGRAM STAFF	49
ANNEX 2 – SUDAN’S INTERNATIONAL TREATY COMMITMENTS	51
ANNEX 3 – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	52

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sudan's youth led the movement that ended the al-Bashir regime and began the current transition to peace and democracy. The special role that youth, particularly young women, played in fostering change is recognized in the Constitutional Charter that establishes the framework for the transitional period. The charter stipulates that a major goal of the transition is to "strengthen the role of young people of both sexes and expand their opportunities in all social, political, and economic fields."¹ As the transition enters its third year, the role and voice of youth, who represent more than 60% of Sudan's population, remain important.² A transition that sidelines youth risks losing the support it needs to succeed.

In August 2020, the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports invited The Carter Center to support the training of youth who would serve as independent, impartial observers of the transitional period and peace advisors in their local communities. To identify youth who could be engaged and establish a baseline of perspectives, in March and April 2021 the Center conducted field research, including mapping, surveying, and focus groups among a diverse range of youth groups in 500 locations across Sudan.

Survey results highlight important trends among youth that are encouraging but also provide early warning to transition officials that there are gaps in how youth engage in and feel about the transition that, if not managed properly, could create significant obstacles to the transition. Although surveyed youth remain highly optimistic about Sudan's trajectory, a majority are not currently engaged in national policymaking. While they are eager to support the transition, 42% said that youth organizations like theirs have little to no voice in the transition process. Respondents recognized dramatic improvements in respect for the human rights of the Sudanese people; however, the goals of the revolution remain largely aspirational for nearly half of those surveyed. Youth interviewed cited concerns about the transition's progress in forming the Transitional Legislative Council and other institutions mandated by the Constitutional Charter, as well as the government's ability to address everyday challenges, including the economy and provision of basic services.

These findings underscore the goodwill that youth have towards the transitional government that should be harnessed, but also the fragility of support and confidence among the representatives of youth-led organizations. Based on these findings, the Carter Center strongly recommends that transition leadership focus on finding official means of engaging youth and incorporating their perspectives, including establishing the bodies of the transition process foreseen by the Constitutional Charter that would allow for their greater participation; establishing a robust communications and engagement campaign to a) inform about the progress of the transition, b) receive grassroots input on the transition, and c) communicate how youth's perspectives are reflected in the process; and designing a transitional justice effort that effectively includes youth.

¹ Constitutional Charter, Chapter 2, Article 7(8).

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Prospects 2019- Population Division (Age composition: Population by Age Groups - Both Sexes.) <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

Methodology

Sudanese youth surveyors trained by The Carter Center identified and mapped 7,238 resistance committees and youth-led organizations across Sudan, of which 1,023 were surveyed through face-to-face interviews. Fifty percent of those groups were resistance committees, 20% were urban civil society organizations, 6% were rural civil society organizations and 13% were community-based organizations. The remaining 11% represent professional associations, student groups, and religious associations, among others.

To complement the quantitative data collected via mapping and surveys, surveyors also collected qualitative data by facilitating more than 120 focus group discussions and interviews with around 400 representatives of youth-led groups, again covering virtually all areas of Sudan. These focus group discussions and interviews were conducted separate from the survey.

This report aims to enhance the voices of Sudanese youth so that their perspectives can be better incorporated in the transition in the period to come. The report describes the attitudes, knowledge, and priorities of youth-led organizations and resistance committees, as reported by these groups' designated representatives, and provides an in-depth assessment of Sudan's political, economic, and social dynamics from their perspective. The data highlights that government officials, civil society actors, political leaders, and other stakeholders need to increase avenues and opportunities for youth to engage in public life. Looking to the future, the report also offers recommendations for ways in which national and international actors can support increased space for youth voices within a peaceful, democratic transition.

Key Findings

- *Goals.* A mere five percent of youth group representatives said that the goals of the revolution, as the events of 2018 and 2019 are popularly known in Sudan, have been met to “a great extent,” while a large plurality of respondents (46%) said that the goals have been met to “some extent.” The remaining 50% of survey respondents said that the goals have been met only “to a small degree” (33%) or “not at all” (17%).
- *Engagement with the government.* Nearly 80% of youth representatives reported that they had not been involved in any government-supported activities since the start of the transition. Over 40% said youth had little or no voice in the transitional government, including 14% who said youth lacked any input at all. This emerging trend of youth feeling dissociated from the transitional government and process may undermine their confidence in Sudan's transition to democracy and sustainable peace.
- *Fragile optimism.* A strong majority of youth group representatives (74%) are optimistic about the future of Sudan, including that gender-related rights are improving and will continue to do so. A majority of survey respondents (52%) said they are satisfied with the transitional government's overall performance as compared to the previous regime. Likewise, 59% felt they have a say in the decisions of the transitional government (but 41% do not), while 50% expect anticipated elections to be held on time and another 50% don't.

These findings, all around 50%, underscore the fragility of support for, and confidence in, the transitional government among the representatives of youth-led organizations. Overall enthusiasm for the post-al-Bashir era remains high—two years into the transition, youth surveyed remain eager to contribute to the consolidation of peace and democracy—but there are expectations that still need to be met for that optimism to be maintained.

- *Familiarity with the transition.* A large majority of those surveyed (83%) are familiar with the main transitional bodies, but nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents—all of whom are actively engaged in civil society and leaders within their organizations—were not familiar with the timetable set out for the transitional period. Just under one-third said they are “not very familiar” with the Constitutional Charter or did “not know it at all.” A slight majority (53%) are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the charter as the framework for the transition. Notably, the charter sparked strongly negative feelings among 20% of respondents, who said they were “very dissatisfied” with it.
- *Charter requirements.* Participants in focus groups and one-on-one interviews across the country underscored the urgent need to establish the full suite of governing bodies and institutions called for in the Constitutional Charter. Respondents are, as a general matter, dissatisfied that certain organs mandated by the charter had not been established as of the drafting of this report, most prominently the Transitional Legislative Council (TLC). Around 55% of youth representatives said they are “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied with the absence of these bodies. This dissatisfaction is most acute in Khartoum, where 55% are “very dissatisfied” with the length of time the transitional government has taken to establish these bodies.
- *Major concerns.* The rising cost of living, as well as the lack of employment and basic services, are the top concerns for youth nationwide. Youth surveyed see improving the economy and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources as linked to reducing crime as well as racial and ethnic conflict. “Discrimination based on race, religion, culture, color, or gender” was seen as a significant challenge by slightly over 30% of the respondents. Although those surveyed were asked to respond on behalf of their organizations, this percentage varied significantly when disaggregated by gender. Approximately 48% of female respondents cited it as a key challenge, as opposed to 32% of male respondents.
- *Prioritization of peacemaking.* A high percentage of youth surveyed (80%) viewed the government’s peacemaking efforts as successful, and focus group participants repeatedly encouraged an acceleration of peacemaking to include groups that did not sign the Juba Peace Agreement.
- *Perceptions about the prioritization of peacemaking.* While youth surveyed remain optimistic overall, those from areas without a history of armed conflict are six percentage points less optimistic about the future than those from conflict-impacted areas (73% feel “somewhat” or “very” optimistic in the former compared to 79% in the latter). Greater Darfur is the most optimistic (87%) about the future, compared with the least positive areas of South and West Kordofan (57%), White Nile and North Kordofan (64%), and Khartoum states (70%). Youth from non-conflict areas said peace-related issues are at

times prioritized over general issues of common concern. A possible conclusion is that dividends from peacemaking and peacebuilding are not yet as evident in non-conflict areas.

- *Personal security.* Nationwide, almost two-thirds of youth surveyed reported an improved sense of personal security. Yet in Khartoum, almost half of respondents (49.7%) reported a deterioration in personal security, and Khartoum respondents, along with those from White Nile, Kassala, and Gezira states, expressed less optimism about the course of the transition than other regions.
- *Transitional justice.* Youth group representatives overwhelmingly support measures to achieve transitional justice and reconciliation. Nearly 100% of respondents ranked institutional reform, post-conflict dialogue, community-building efforts and other initiatives as “important” or “very important” to achieving transitional justice. Notably, among a list of possible avenues to achieve transitional justice, “forgiveness” ranked last, nearly 30 percentage points lower than the next lowest option. By contrast, post-conflict dialogue ranked high across the country, particularly in conflict-impacted states, where 92% of respondents said it is “very important,” compared to 82% in non-conflict states.

Also notable was that, among youth surveyed, the transitional government suffered from a low level of trust to lead transitional justice efforts, with just 7% of respondents choosing it over six other possible options. Although no entities enjoyed particularly strong trust among youth group representatives, those surveyed expressed modest support for transitional justice to be principally handled by either civil society (20%), an independent commission (20%), or a newly elected government (17%).

- *Information requirements.* Large majorities of youth receive information via social media (83%). More than 90% consider the information they receive either “very reliable” or “somewhat reliable.” Yet they also acknowledge having little experience or know-how in assessing the accuracy and quality of information. Training on social media and public communication is among their top requests, as is training on how to gather information and conduct advocacy.

Key Recommendations

To the government of Sudan:

- Prioritize youth involvement in government decision-making by identifying and developing regular channels for them to express their views at the local, state, and national levels. Actions could include holding in-person or online public forums on the transition and peacemaking processes; creating a hotline where youth could provide perspectives via text or e-mail; and strengthening networks for sharing youth views on transition-related issues with government officials and disseminating accurate, reliable information to youth and communities at the local level.
- Quickly establish the representative governing bodies and institutions called for in the Constitutional Charter, including the TLC and other commissions.

- Intensify efforts to reach peace agreements with those armed actors who have not signed the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) and accelerate implementation of the JPA.
- Create and implement a youth-focused outreach strategy with the aim of sharing information about the transitional and peacemaking processes and engaging their participation. It should include bolstering communication in non-conflict areas about the benefits and dividends of peacemaking.
- Support a framework for transitional justice that places civil society and independent commissions at the heart of those efforts.

To civil society, political parties, and other Sudanese stakeholders:

- Establish coalitions around employment, health care, and the rising cost of living—the top priorities of youth across Sudan, regardless of region. These coalitions should include avenues for youth to engage and provide perspectives on addressing these issues.
- Building on the trust respondents place in civil society, develop transitional justice initiatives led by credible and inclusive coalitions of civil society stakeholders.

To the international community:

- Keep youth front-and-center, including by seeking their input on initiatives and encouraging Sudanese stakeholders to do the same. This step is vital if Sudan’s transition is to be sustainable. After a long period of youth disenfranchisement and victimization, the survey results underscore the continuing, keen interest of young women and men to be included in decision-making related to the transition and to contribute actively to laying the peaceful, democratic foundations of the Sudan in which they aspire to live.
- Continue to support links between youth nationwide as a central means of overcoming Sudan’s historic divisions and reinforcing a key ballast of the transitional process. Despite regional differences, youth across Sudan share common priorities and concerns—yet often they do not realize this fact, perceiving historic regional differences as greater than they are.
- Support training for youth on public communication and discerning the accuracy of information, within the overall goal of fostering a transparent social media environment. This can act as a bulwark against misinformation and serve, if necessary, as an early warning mechanism for potential conflict.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK: OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Objectives

Since 1987, The Carter Center has worked to strengthen peace, democracy, and public health in Sudan. Activities have ranged from supporting agriculture and the elimination of neglected tropical diseases, including Guinea worm disease, to fostering peace negotiations and monitoring elections. The Center maintains a permanent office in Khartoum that supports public health programming in nine states. It recently re-opened an office dedicated to supporting peace and the transition process, with a particular focus on remote and often-neglected areas of South Darfur and Blue Nile states in addition to its engagement with youth across Sudan.

Sudan's historic transition continues more than two years after the fall of the regime led by former president Omar al-Bashir. While the transition is replete with political, security, and socioeconomic challenges, it also offers unprecedented opportunities to establish a peaceful, inclusive, and democratic Sudan that, after decades of authoritarianism and the marginalization of important sectors, meets the aspirations of its people, particularly youth under the age of 30, who constitute nearly 70% of the population.³

Young Sudanese, notably young women, played a courageous and vital role in the protests leading to the ouster of the former regime and the initiation of the transitional period. The special place of youth in fostering change is recognized in the Constitutional Charter that sets the framework for the transitional period. The preamble recognizes the "role of young people in leading the revolutionary moment," while Chapter 2, Article 7(8) sets "strengthening the role of young people of both sexes and the expansion of their opportunities in all social, political, and economic fields" as a core mandate of the transitional government.

On the occasion of International Youth Day in August 2020, the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports invited the Center to support the training and development of youth who would serve as independent, impartial observers and local peace advisors during the transitional period. Following the signing of a memorandum of understanding, the Center, in coordination with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, planned and conducted an independent, nationwide mapping of youth-led organizations and resistance committees, as well as a survey of the attitudes, perceptions, and priorities of youth representatives. The survey covered a range of topics: peace and peacemaking; socioeconomic and economic issues; the performance of the transitional government; the overall transitional process; and specific priorities and challenges faced by youth.

Sudan's Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports invited The Carter Center to support the training and development of youth who would serve as independent, impartial observers and local peace advisors during the transitional period.

³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Prospects 2019- Population Division (Age composition: Population by Age Groups - Both Sexes.) <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

This report presents the results of the mapping and survey of thousands of youth-led groups and their representatives conducted in March and April 2021 across Sudan. The report has three main objectives:

- Collect and present impartial information on youth’s awareness, attitudes, and activities in the transitional period, including their definitions of the most significant challenges and priorities.
- Provide a comprehensive baseline of information on the attitudes and perspectives of representatives of youth groups to inform decision-making by local and national stakeholders and international supporters.
- Through this information, support young Sudanese youth’s desire to continue contributing to realizing the aims of the revolution by helping to inform training and support for independent, impartial youth citizen observers who will act as watchdogs and peace advisors in their local communities.

Ultimately, the initiative, by creating clear channels of communication between youth and the transitional government, aims to further empower youth and help ensure the transitional process reflects youth's aspirations and bolsters their efforts to build peace, strengthen democracy, and enhance inclusive dialogue and civic space.

Methodological Framework

The Carter Center conducted multi-phased, field-based research, employing quantitative and qualitative methods across the entirety of Sudan, including many of the most remote, peripheral, and war-torn areas. The mapping aimed to produce a comprehensive picture of youth-led organizations in Sudan, including resistance committees, urban and rural organizations, and professional and other groups. Overall, 7,238 organizations were identified. Surveyors, who were also youth, conducted 1,023 face-to-face interviews and more than 120 in-depth focus group discussions and interviews with over 400 youth activists. The subsequent survey focused on the attitudes and perceptions of a diverse, nationwide sample of representatives designated by resistance committees and other organizations. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents were under the age of 30.

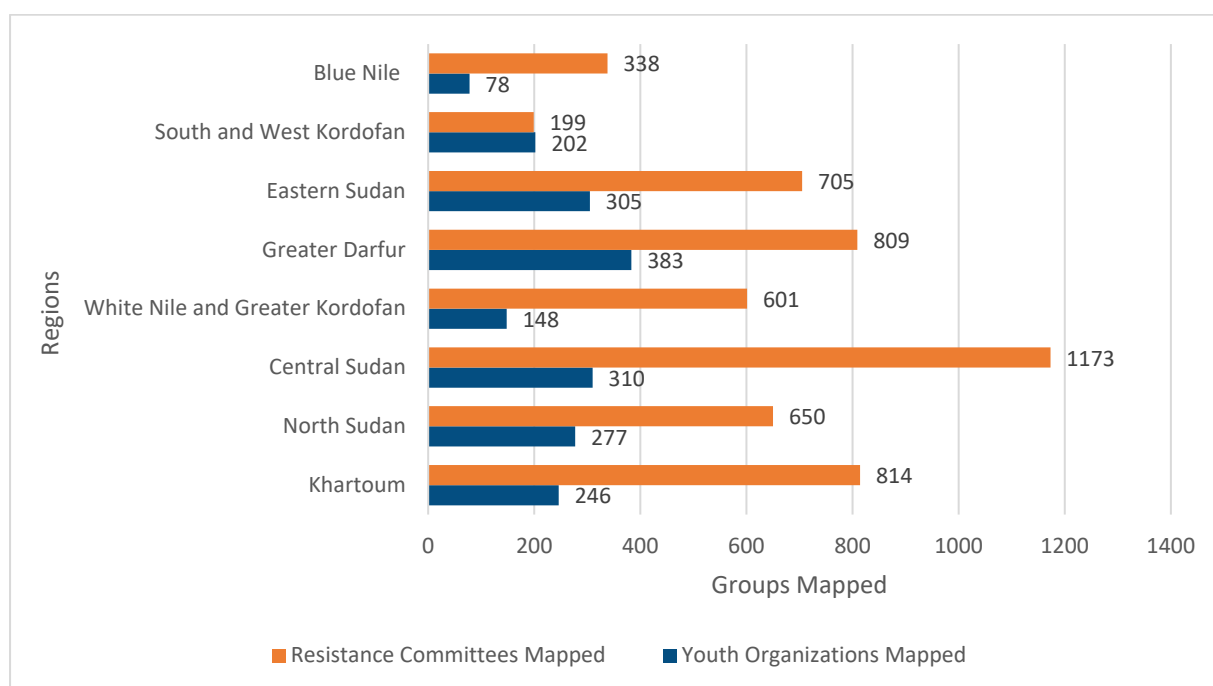
Recruitment and Training of Survey Managers

The Carter Center recruited and then trained surveyors (sometimes called survey managers) from all of Sudan’s 18 states. To help foster trust between surveyors and those surveyed or interviewed and to encourage peer-to-peer conversations, all surveyors were under the age of 34. They used survey research methodology, including snowball sampling, to map the resistance committees and youth-led organizations. They received additional training to ensure that they selected a randomly chosen, geographically diverse sample of interviewees from among the designated representatives of the mapped organizations. Surveyors were also trained on protocols for survey interview techniques and electronic data collection to ensure more reliable data. Surveyors facilitated five to eight focus group discussions per state, with each group having between eight and 12 participants who were designated by the surveyed groups.

Mapping

In March 2021, the survey managers deployed throughout Sudan, mapping 7,238 resistance committees and youth organizations in local communities. Mapping was conducted through a snowballing method wherein youth-led organizations and resistance committees connected surveyors to other groups. The mapping itself consisted of responses to a short series of questions covering the primary details of an organization's activities, membership, leadership, location, and contact information. The mapping was conducted largely through in-person and telephone interviews. Among the groups mapped, 5,289 (73%) were resistance committees, while 1,949 (27%) were other kinds of youth-led organizations. Figure 1 below presents the distribution of mapped organizations by region.

Figure 1: Geographical Distribution of Youth-Led Organizations and Resistance Committees



Survey Content and Survey Themes

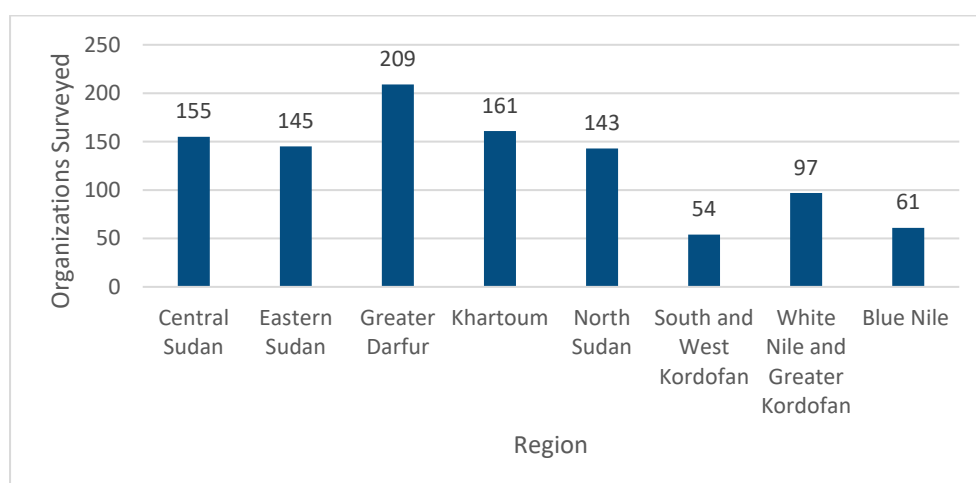
Following the mapping, 1,023 youth group representatives agreed to participate in a 60-question survey (see annex for the survey questions). The survey questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussions covered eight thematic areas:

1. Attitudes toward Peace, Conflict, and the Juba Peace Agreement
2. Transitional Justice and Accountability
3. Perceptions and Attitudes toward the Transition, the Constitutional Charter, the Transitional Government, and the Future
4. Access to Information and the Internet
5. Democracy and Governance
6. Women and Gender
7. Transitional Priorities
8. Needs Identified by Youth

Data Collection

Survey managers administered surveys and collected data over a seven-week period in March and April 2021. Fifteen percent of the previously mapped youth-led organizations and resistance committees were randomly selected to participate in the survey. Individual respondents were asked to respond on behalf of their respective organizations. In contrast to the mapping phase, during which some research took place by telephone, all 1,023 surveys were conducted in person. Survey managers conducted surveys with an individual respondent representing each group or organization, usually its designated leader or spokesman or spokeswoman. After the completion of surveys, data was inputted electronically into NEMO, the Carter Center’s open-source reporting system. NEMO allowed survey managers to submit surveys via Android devices, SMS, or from a web browser. Surveyors conducted a total of 124 focus groups as well as in-depth interviews with youth representatives to explore the survey themes in greater depth; surveyors targeted a diverse pool of organizations to take part in the qualitative research, depending on the group’s type, focus, political background and relative size.

Figure 2: Number of Surveys Collected by Region



Regional Disaggregation

Data was collected on a state-by-state basis. Because of the relatively small sample size in some states, and to make the presentation easier to comprehend, the data was then aggregated into eight geographic regions, as detailed below.⁴

1. Greater Darfur (North Darfur, South Darfur, Central Darfur, West Darfur and East Darfur)*
2. North Sudan (North Sudan, River Nile)
3. Eastern Sudan (Kassala, Red Sea, Gedaref)
4. South and West Kordofan (South Kordofan, West Kordofan)*
5. White Nile and North Kordofan
6. Central Sudan (Gezira and Sennar)
7. Blue Nile*
8. Khartoum (Khartoum)

*States historically impacted by armed conflict.

⁴ States were grouped for presentation in the report but do not represent a political statement or denote any other classification.

The terms “conflict states” and “non-conflict states” are used in this report to refer to specific groupings of Sudanese states. “Conflict states” refer to North, South, East, West, and Central Darfur; South and West Kordofan; and Blue Nile. These states have experienced protracted violent conflict. “Non-conflict states” refer to the remaining states.

Limitations of the Survey

While the mapping and surveying occurred nationwide, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge from the outset certain limitations.

- While all 1,023 surveys took place in person, some parts of Sudan were not accessible, whether because those zones are under the control of armed groups or due to the absence of transportation in the area. Notably, mapped organizations and youth group representatives in the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan come from government-controlled areas. No mapping or surveying took place in the zones under the control of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu. Similarly, while some rebel-held areas of Jabal Marra in Darfur were reached in person or by phone during the mapping phase, others were inaccessible.
- The mapping and surveying data is self-reported. Some data, such as respondents’ statements about the number of existing youth organizations and resistance committees in a specified area, could not be independently verified. There is also a fundamental uncertainty regarding the total population (N) of youth-led organizations and resistance committees; the accuracy of the survey sample size (n) should be considered in that light.
- Although respondents were asked to answer on behalf of their organizations, it is difficult to confirm the extent to which they did so or, if rather, they responded based on their individual knowledge or views, which may or may not be representative of views within the organization. Also, given the guidance to respondents to respond on behalf of their organizations, there are clear limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from data disaggregated by the gender of the respondent because they are not necessarily responding as a woman or man but rather as their organization’s designee.

BACKGROUND: YOUTH IN SUDAN'S REVOLUTION AND TRANSITION

Youth in Sudan's Politics

Despite Sudan's massive youth population (68% of the population is below 30 years of age, while 3.2% are 66 years and above), the participation of young Sudanese in political life remains limited.⁵ Throughout Sudan's modern history—which has been marked by protracted and recurring civil wars, violence, and political instability—youth were and remain among the most adversely affected groups. They have frequently been recruited as fighters or drawn into wars. Today, they continue to drop out of school in large numbers, experience high rates of premature death and unemployment, and participate in large-scale, dangerous patterns of migration.⁶

The government repressed civic space during al-Bashir's 30-year rule. Independent actors, including youth and women organizations, were often blocked from meaningful engagement in public affairs. Exclusionary strategies, included preventing organizations from accessing technical and financial support, banning and closing organizations, and expelling international organizations working with local civic actors, including youth-led organizations, were common. Although many of the previous regime's repressive practices and policies have now been formally revoked, their imprint and consequences continue to have far-reaching impact.

Youth, the Revolution, and the Transition

In December 2018, rising food prices and declining economic opportunity sparked popular protests across Sudan, led largely by young people, particularly young women, which were often mobilized through grassroots resistance committees that emerged at the time. The protests culminated in April 2019 with the ouster of al-Bashir.

The leading role of the youth in the revolution, often through street demonstrations and sit-ins, was unprecedented. Following al-Bashir's fall, negotiations began between civilian and military leaders, leading to the adoption of the Constitutional Charter signed in August 2019 by the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC). The charter lays out the framework for a 39-month transition to democratic government and establishes the interim transitional government, including the Sovereign Council, a civilian-led cabinet, and the Transitional Legislative Council (TLC), among other bodies. It also creates, or reconstitutes, a host of independent commissions and institutions focused on specific thematic issues. In August 2019, a civilian prime minister, Abdullah Hamdok, his cabinet, and the Sovereign Council were inaugurated.

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Prospects 2019- Population Division (Age composition: Population by Age Groups - Both Sexes.) <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

⁶ See, [Sudan Istanbul IPoA.doc \(un.org\)](#)

Recognizing the role of young people in leading the revolutionary movement, the charter commits the signatories to enhancing the role of young people in Sudan's politics and society. Chapter 2, Article 7(8) mandates the transitional government to "strengthen the role of young people of both sexes and the expand their opportunities in all social, political, and economic fields."⁷

The Constitutional Charter commits the signatories to enhancing the role of young people in Sudan's politics and society.

The charter outlines several broad goals for the transitional period, including prioritizing the ending of the Sudan's longstanding, intractable civil wars; holding a constitutional conference; adopting a new constitution; and holding national elections to select a new government. Within this framework, the charter allows leaders significant latitude in the sequencing and substance of reforms. This period, extended in October 2020 by the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), is now anticipated to culminate with the holding of democratic national elections in 2024.

The transitional government has prioritized redressing Sudan's international isolation, addressing its economic crisis, and negotiating an end to the country's civil wars. In October 2020, the government and armed movements from Darfur and eastern Sudan, as well as South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states, agreed to JPA. Implementation is underway. Yet the JPA did not resolve all of Sudan's conflicts. Notably, negotiations continue between the government and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-North, led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, and the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Mohamed al-Nur. Meanwhile, Sudan's severe economic crisis, including a 412% inflation rate as of June 2021, continues to weigh on the transitional process.⁸

Youth in the Transition

Given the catalytic and dynamic role youth played in Sudan's revolution, young Sudanese expected to play a large part in the post-al-Bashir transition. In practice, however, the participation of youth in the main bodies of the transitional government, the civilian cabinet and the Sovereign Council, is virtually nonexistent. Indeed, the prolonged delays in fully establishing the TLC (originally scheduled to commence its work in November 2019 and not operational as of the writing of this report), as well as other institutions mandated by the charter, including the peace, human rights and transitional justice commissions, have reduced opportunities for youth participation in policymaking at the national and state levels.

Youth-led resistance committees and organizations remain active. Without a defined role in national or state-level politics, many have turned their focus to local-level issues and action. The large, loose, and nationwide coalitions of the revolutionary period have largely given way to a more dispersed scene, often divided by region and, at times, by ideology. Today, no singular body, platform, or person speaks for Sudanese youth—and yet youth remain a significant force, for example playing a leading role in organizing large-scale demonstrations in November 2020 and June 2021. Given their massive percentage of the population, their role in

No singular body, platform, or person speaks for Sudanese youth – and yet youth remain a significant force.

⁷ Constitutional Charter, Chapter 2, Article 7(8).

⁸ See, <https://www.reuters.com/article/sudan-inflation/sudans-inflation-rate-rises-to-412-75-in-june-idUSL1N2OU0C6>

the revolution, and their potential for mobilization, a key question—what will be the role of youth in the transition? —remains far from fully answered.

[Sudan's Commitment to Youth's Civil and Political Rights](#)

While the Constitutional Charter mandates the transitional government to support youth, that framework is supplemented by Sudan's commitments under international law. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance; the African Youth Charter; and other international instruments establish universal protections for human rights, including political and civic rights.

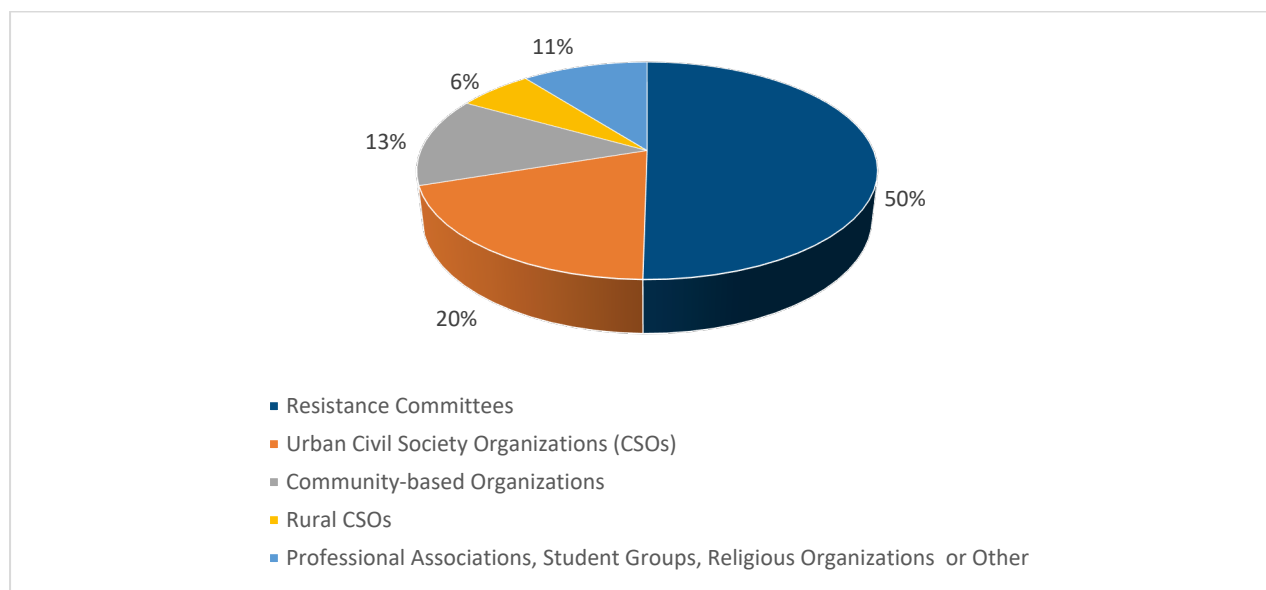
Article 11 of the African Youth Charter commits signatories, including Sudan, to strengthen platforms for youth participation in decision-making at all levels of governance and make youth aware of opportunities to engage in civic life. In addition, Article 13 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, ratified by Sudan in 2013, requires signatories to maintain open political dialogue and transparent governance as key components of peace and democracy. Finally, through its ratification of the ICCPR and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Sudan recognizes that all citizens hold the fundamental right to take part in public affairs.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Profile of the Youth-Led Organizations and Resistance Committees Mapped and Surveyed

Youth civil society across Sudan is diverse, and a majority of organizations surveyed (57%) reported between 10 and 50 members. Respondents classified their organizations as:

Figure 3: Breakdown of Surveyed Groups by Type



According to focus group participants, their respective organizations' activities are largely divided into two thematic areas:

1. Development, including public health, education and other social issues. These groups are involved in service delivery to complement or fill a void left by current government services.
2. Outreach, advocacy, and governance-related issues, including combatting corruption, educating the population about the transition, and informing the public of political developments. Notably, resistance committees play both roles.

In Khartoum, youth groups are evenly split along these lines. However, in peripheral regions, activists reported that their organizations tend to be service-oriented, with some groups targeting assistance to specific groups, including women and marginalized populations. For example, in White Nile, youth representatives of civil society organizations said their groups focused on combating female genital mutilation and child marriage, while those interviewed in Gedaref said they support people with special needs.

After the revolution, many youth who were members of then-existing civil society organizations also became active as members of resistance committees, a situation which resulted in

Resistance committees are working to put pressure on the transitional government through monitoring and, importantly, by correcting its course in the event of deviation.

- Focus group participant, Gedaref

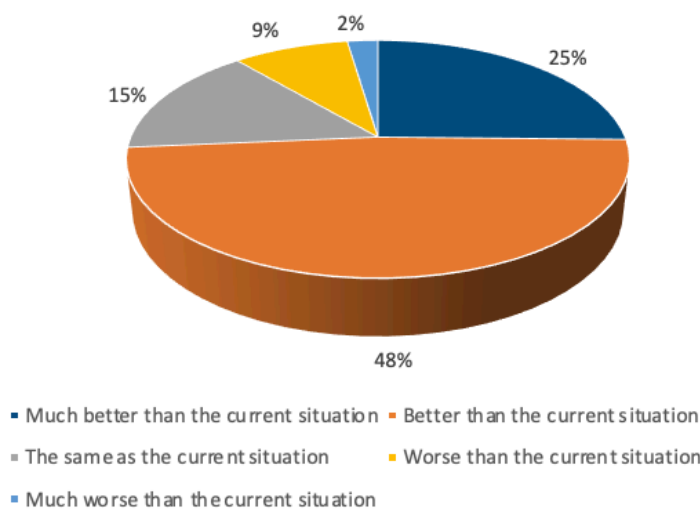
overlapping memberships. In focus groups, representatives of resistance committees described their activities as filling a monitoring role. They view themselves as watchdogs of the executive branch of the government, the security forces, and the overall transitional process, particularly at the community level.

Across Sudan, participants also said resistance committees organize seminars, sit-ins, and demonstrations to inform the local population about the political situation and other key issues. In addition, resistance committees work to “support society and improve their [sic] access to services.” For example, in Gezira and Sennar, focus group participants said resistance committees promote transparent service delivery, including supervising the distribution of fuel and flour.

Overview of Findings

Youth organization and resistance committee representatives who participated in the survey expressed optimism about their country’s future. More than 73% of survey respondents said that youth believe the future will be “much better” or “better” than the current situation. They are eager to engage in Sudan’s newly expanded civic space and exercise their right to participate in the country’s public affairs.

Figure 4: Views of Youth on the Future of Sudan



Although survey respondents were generally positive, they acknowledged the ongoing nature of Sudan’s transition and the long road ahead. A mere five percent of respondents said that the goals of the revolution have been met to “a great extent,” while a large plurality of respondents (46%) said that the goals have been met to “some extent.” The remaining 50% of survey respondents said that the goals have been met only “to a small degree” (33%) or “not at all” (17%).

More than two years into the transitional period, a large majority of survey respondents (83%) are familiar with the main transitional bodies. However, a significant information deficit exists among some youth. Nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents—all of whom are actively engaged in civil society and leaders within their organizations—were not familiar with the timetable set out for the transitional period. One-third said they are “not very familiar” or are “not at all familiar”

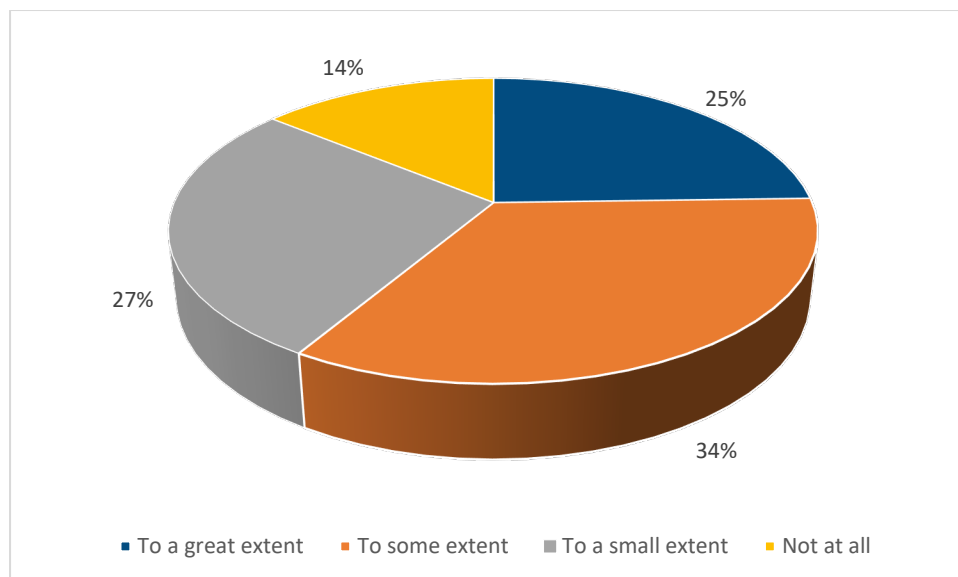
with the Constitutional Charter. A majority (53%) are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the charter as the framework for the transition. Notably, the charter sparked strongly negative feelings among 20% of respondents, who said they were “very dissatisfied” with it. Those who were satisfied with the charter’s ability to provide the legal basis for the transition appear more satisfied overall; they were more likely to say the revolution had reached its goals (68%) than those who said that it had not (38%).

Respondents’ overall assessment of the transition appears intertwined with the pace of its implementation. Participants in focus groups and one-on-one interviews across the country underscored the urgent need to establish the representative governing bodies and institutions called for in the Constitutional Charter. For example, a participant in a focus group in North Kordofan stressed that there is an “an urgent need to move forward with the legislative council and other commissions,” while an activist in West Kordofan underscored the “importance of establishing the commissions, reforming the judiciary and reinforcing its independence.”

41% of youth organizations said they have only minor or no influence on decision-makers.

Despite their strong interest in engaging in supporting the transition, only one-quarter of survey respondents said that the transitional government allows youth organizations like theirs to have a significant voice in the transition process. An additional 41% said youth organizations have only minor or no influence on decision-makers. The emerging trend of youth feeling dissociated from the transitional government and process may undermine their confidence in Sudan’s transition to democracy and sustainable peace.

Figure 5: Reported Level of Influence on the Transitional Government



As the transition enters its third year, focus group participants acknowledged that they have little to no experience in public advocacy or policymaking, but given their role in the revolution and overall activism, they nevertheless see their engagement in the constitutional, electoral, and peace processes as important to consolidate Sudan’s democratic institutions and build good governance. They expressed an urgent need for training and support to build their capacities in

public advocacy and understanding of the transitional documents and legal framework in order to participate more fully in the transition.

Perceptions and Attitudes Toward the Main Topics in the Transition

Expectations of the Transitional Government

Survey respondents and focus group participants alike expressed high expectations of the transitional government, including that it will address longstanding issues plaguing Sudan. Most of those surveyed said there had been improvement terms of exercising fundamental freedoms, especially the freedom of expression.

However, research participants underscored that much work remains to accomplish the revolution's long-term goals encapsulated in the slogan "peace, freedom, and justice." Focus group participants listed civil liberties, gender equality, peace, and free and fair elections that lead to an elected government as key components of the transition. They said that democratic transformation would require inculcating principles of democracy in Sudanese society.

Views of the Transitional Period Overall

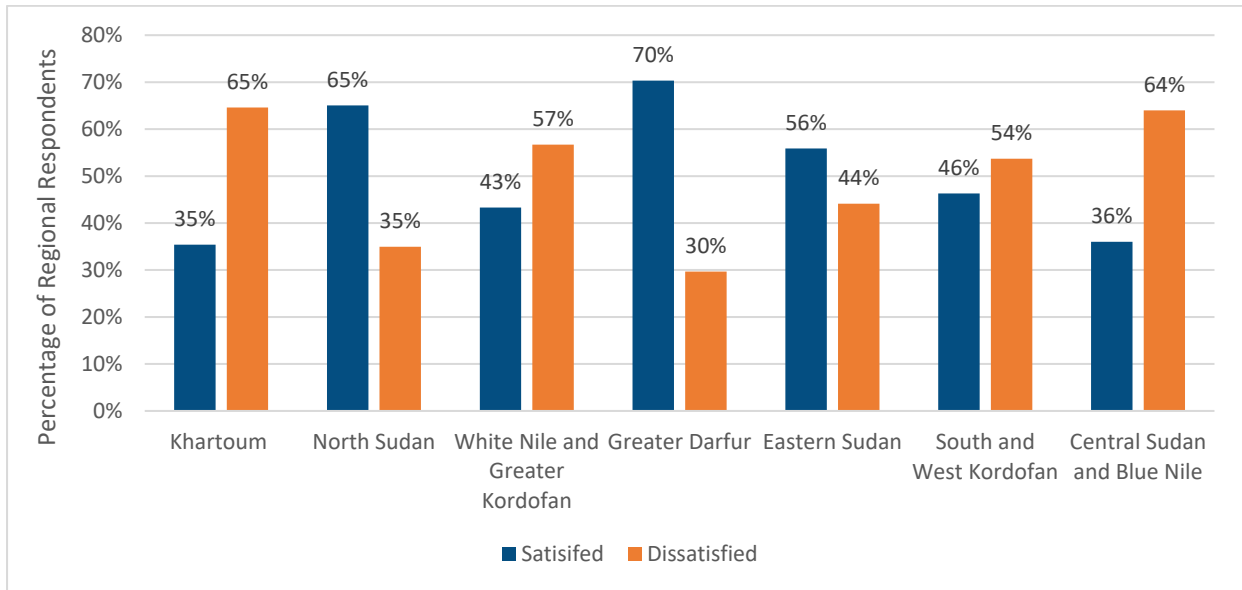
More than three out of four youth included in the survey said that they are aware of the timetable set out for the transitional period, as per the Constitutional Charter and the JPA. Those in Khartoum state were most familiar with these structures (91%) and timeline (87%), while those in Central Sudan and Blue Nile were the least familiar with the structures and timeline (82% and 67%, respectively). Representatives of resistance committees likewise are highly aware of the architecture of the transitional government (86%).

93% of respondents in Khartoum had concerns about the transition, versus 68% nationwide.

At the same time, more than 68% of respondents said their organizations have concerns regarding the transitional process. Notably, in Khartoum, 93% of respondents had concerns about the transition.

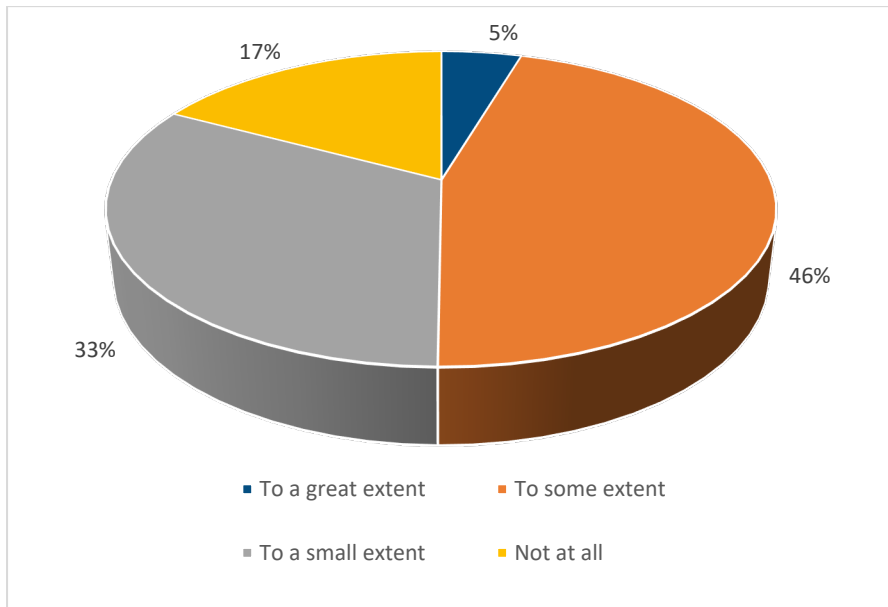
The breakdown of confidence in the transitional process by region is below.

Figure 6: Views on the Performance of the Transitional Government by Region



Attitudes are evenly split on whether the revolution has achieved its goals. A majority (50%) evaluated developments positively, i.e., the goals of the revolution had been achieved “to some extent” or “to a great extent.” Of these, very few respondents (5%) said the goals of the revolution have been reached to a “great extent.” The other 50% of respondents said that the goals of the revolution had been achieved “to a small extent” or “not at all.”

Figure 7: Sudanese Youth Representatives’ Views on Whether the “Goals of the Revolution” Have Been Reached



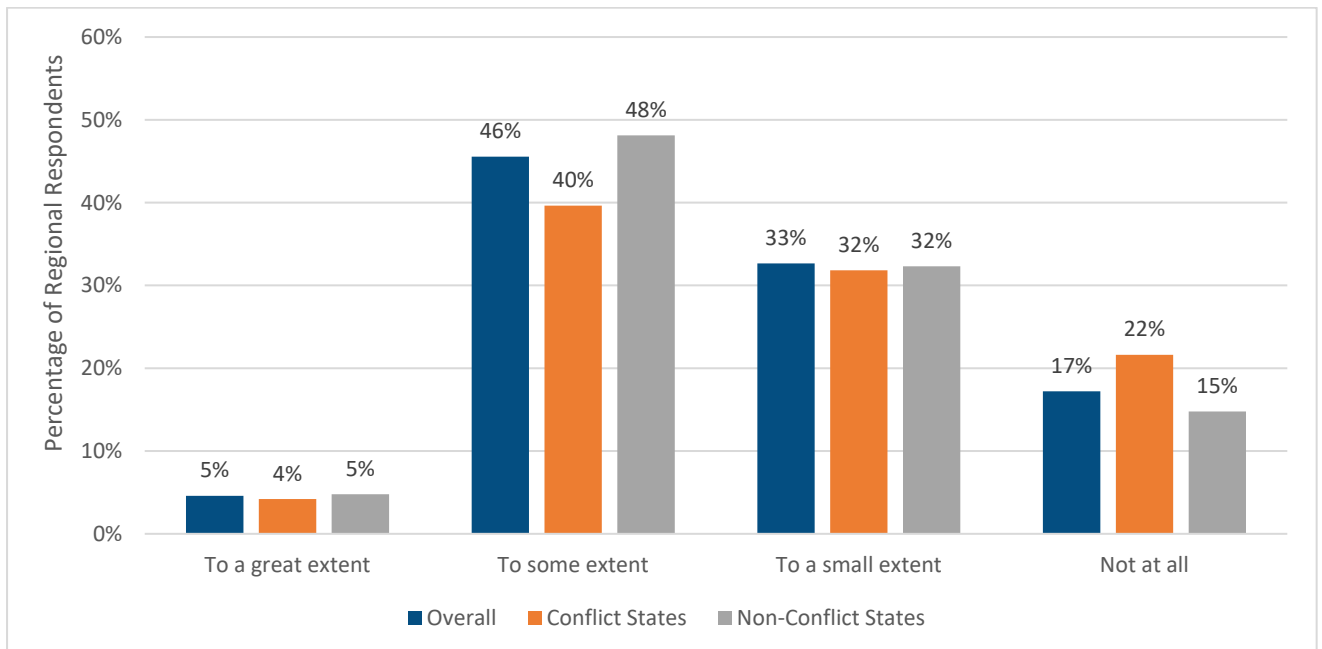
Notably, respondents in non-conflict states were almost 10 percentage points more likely (53%) to say that the goals of the revolution have been met to a “great extent” or “to some extent” than respondents in conflict states (44%). Only 14% of respondents in Central Darfur indicated that

the goals had been met “to some extent,” and none said they were met “to a great extent,” whereas in Red Sea state this figure was 78%, and in Gedaref it was 73%.

These sentiments were explored further during in-depth interviews and focus groups. Participants in North Kordofan cited the (excessive) number of political parties, infrastructure issues, the lack of a peace agreement with SPLM/A-N (al-Hilu), the lack of transitional justice measures, and the economic situation as key issues plaguing the transition. Participants in Kassala said that one of their primary concerns was the lack of youth-specific actions by the transitional government, which was described as a “disgrace to the government of the youth revolution.”

The transitional government was formed according to the Constitutional Charter, and has made remarkable steps; however, its power structures remain incomplete and have not yet fully achieved the goals of the revolution.
 - Focus group participant, River Nile state

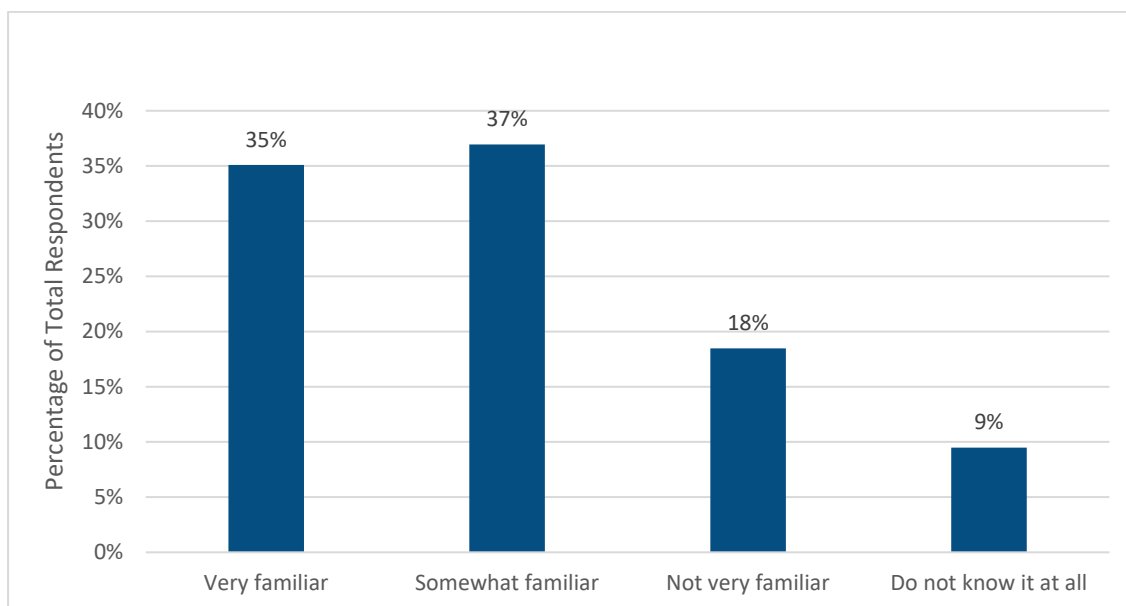
Figure 8: Views on the Success of the Transition



Views of the Constitutional Charter

The majority (72%) of survey respondents reported good or high familiarity with the Constitutional Charter, but work remains to be done on familiarization, with 28% of youth organizations still not very familiar or familiar at all with it. The following chart shows levels of familiarity with the charter:

Figure 9: Familiarity with the Constitutional Charter



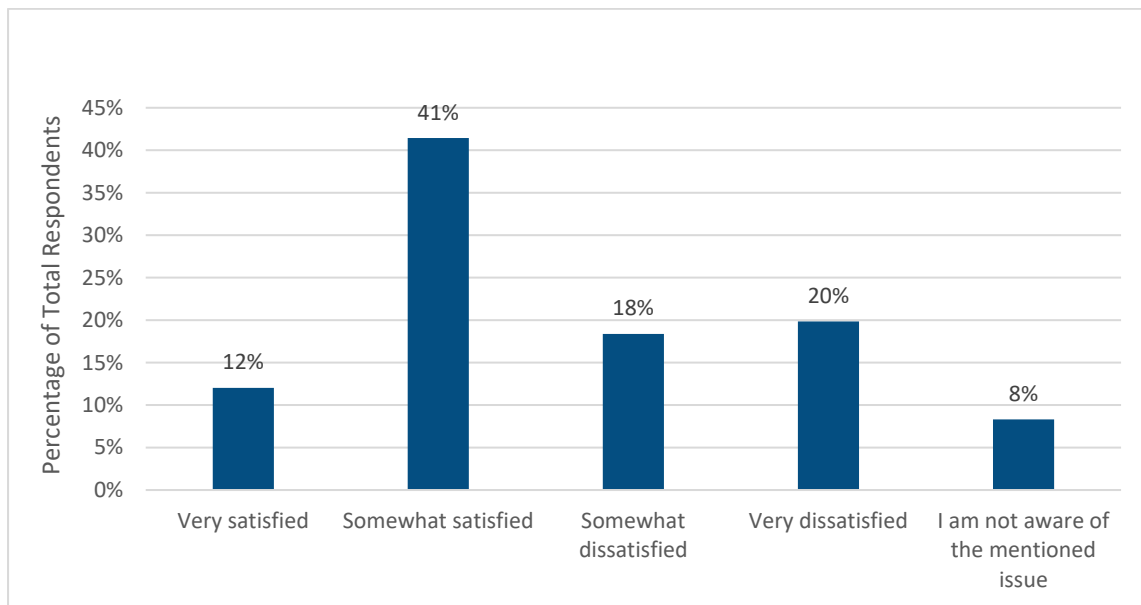
Nearly 72% of respondents indicate that they are either “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the charter. This finding is consistent across most regions, although respondents in non-conflict states appear to show higher levels of familiarity (74%) than those in conflict states (66%). In non-conflict states, levels of familiarity with the charter peak at 98% in River Nile state and reach a trough of 51% in Sennar.

When assessing the data by regional groupings or individual states, there appears to be a strong correlation between the level of familiarity with the charter and the peace negotiations and whether major armed groups in each state have signed the JPA. For example, in Blue Nile only half of respondents indicated familiarity with the charter. Levels of familiarity plummet in South Kordofan, where only 36% of respondents indicated some level of familiarity. Conversely, more than 77% of respondents in the Greater Darfur region indicated that they are either “somewhat familiar” (44%) or “very familiar” (33%) with the Constitutional Charter, reaching a remarkable combined 90% in West Darfur.

Region	Somewhat Familiar or Very Familiar with the Charter	Not Very Familiar or Not at All Familiar with the Charter
Greater Darfur	77%	23%
North Sudan	86%	14%
Central Sudan	73%	27%
Eastern Sudan	67%	33%
White Nile and North Kordofan	73%	27%
South and West Kordofan	52%	48%
Khartoum	71%	29%
Blue Nile	49%	51%

A slim majority of survey respondents nationwide expressed satisfaction with the Charter as the overall framework for the country’s transition. The chart below summarizes views collected:

Figure 10: Youth Representatives’ Views of the Constitutional Charter



Notably, approximately 53% of youth polled said they are either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the charter. Support for the charter as the transition’s legal framework is lowest in Khartoum, where a majority (approximately 54%) said they are dissatisfied and 36% said they are “very dissatisfied.”

Respondents across Sudan are largely dissatisfied that some of the main transitional bodies mandated by the Constitutional Charter, namely the TLC, have not yet been established. Around 56% of youth activists said they are “somewhat” (27%) or “very dissatisfied” (28%) with the absence of these organs. This dissatisfaction is most acute in Khartoum, where 55% are “very dissatisfied” with the current set-up of transitional bodies.

Satisfaction with the Transitional Government

Perceptions among those polled are also split on the overall performance of the transitional government and its delivery of services and responsiveness.

A majority of respondents nationwide (52%) said they are either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the overall performance of the transitional government, with 12% indicating that they are “very satisfied.”

Generally speaking, these findings are consistent across representatives of resistance committees and other organizations, and among youth respondents regardless of age range—yet there are significant differences across regions (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Satisfaction with the Transitional Government

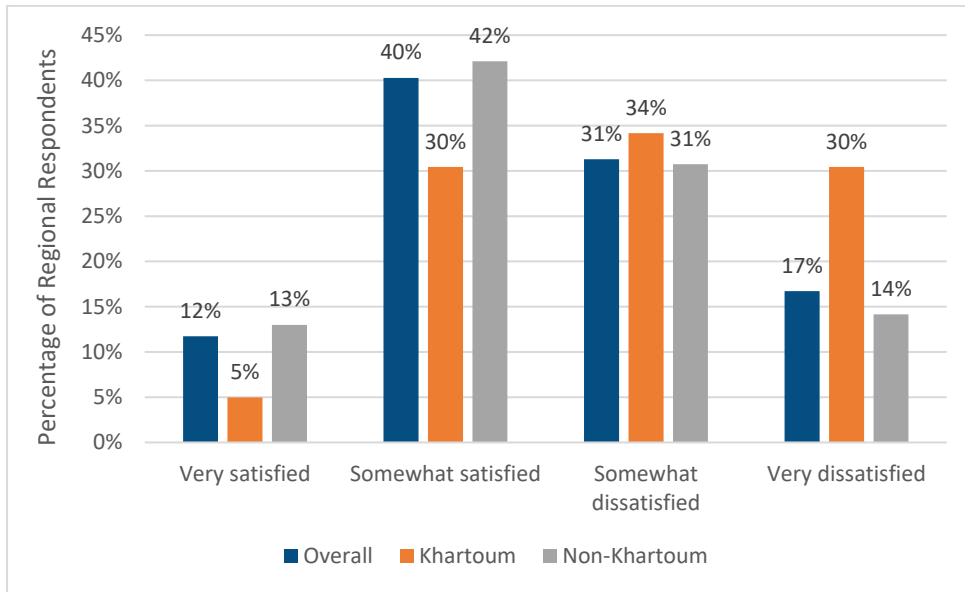
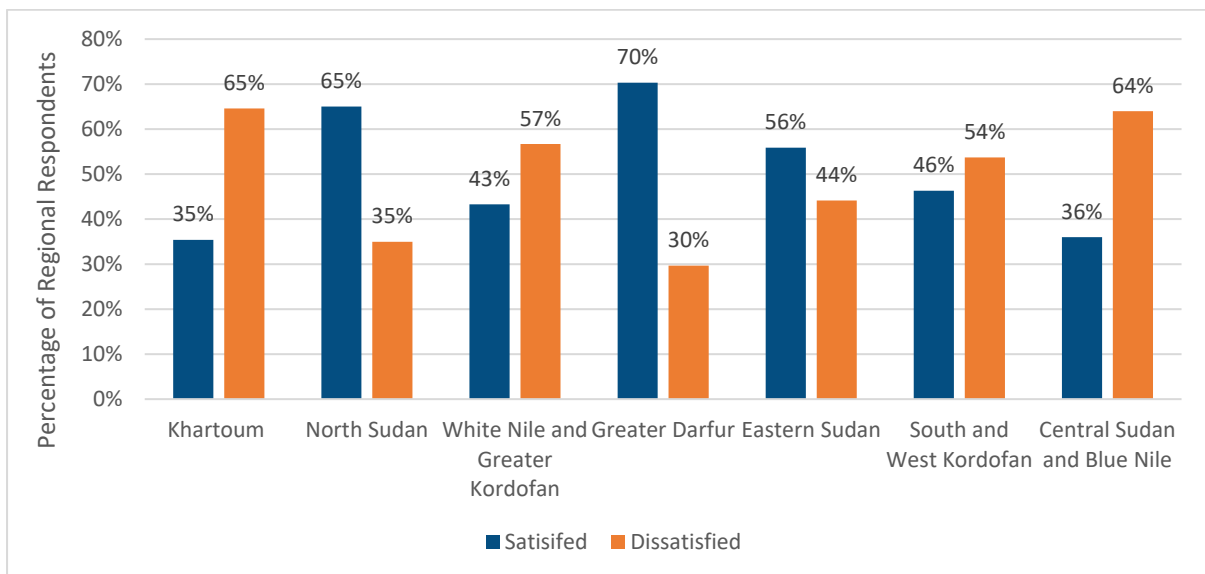


Figure 12 illustrates the levels of satisfaction with the transitional government by region.

Figure 12: Views on the Performance of the Transitional Government by Region



Optimism about the transition is significantly lower in Khartoum than elsewhere in Sudan. More than 65% of Khartoum respondents indicated they are either “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with the transitional government. Dissatisfaction was also higher in non-conflict states (52% were “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”) than in conflict states (only 39% held those views).

Along with their counterparts in Khartoum, respondents from Gezira, Kassala, and White Nile states expressed the greatest levels of dissatisfaction (65%, 64%, and 67%, respectively). Focus group participants in these states said that the transitional government prioritizes issues related to peace and improving the situation in conflict states at the expense of the general issues faced by youth across Sudan.

Conversely, the level of satisfaction is highest in Greater Darfur, where more than 70% of respondents stated that they are either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the overall performance of the transitional government, considering its ability to provide services and its responsiveness, as compared to the previous government. This sentiment is even stronger in certain states, such as South Darfur, where more than 82% of respondents said they were “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the overall performance of the transitional government. This level of satisfaction does not exist in all conflict states, however. For example, in Central Sudan and Blue Nile, the level of dissatisfaction reaches 59%, and in South and West Kordofan, it is 51%. While data disaggregated to the regional level should be considered cautiously because of the relatively small sample size in some states, focus group results support the trends seen in the data.

The performance of the transitional government is less than the ambition of the revolutionaries.

- Focus group participant, Blue Nile state

Peace has not been completed as long as there are still some movements that have not joined the agreement yet, in addition to the [Juba] agreement being subject to partisan quotas. In order to achieve real peace, all stakeholders must be involved in peace so that we can fully implement the agreement.

- Focus group participant, Blue Nile state

Views on the Economy and Basic Services

The economy, unemployment, and the need for economic development and basic services surfaced as a shared concern across all surveys and focus groups. Focus group participants emphasized the need for improving access to health care and educational opportunities, especially for youth.

Health services are weak in terms of work environment, staff and laboratories.

- Focus group participant, Gedaref state

Service provision is not good; it is hard to access water, electricity, and gas.

- Focus group participant, White Nile state

The quality of the services provided by the government are poor [and] do not match youth aspirations or rise to the level of sacrifices made by the youth. The government should take responsibility for improving the quality of services provided and engaging young people.

- Focus group participant, Gezira state

More broadly, survey respondents and focus group participants underscored the need to tackle youth unemployment and decrease poverty. For many, improving the economy and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources is linked to reducing crime and racial and ethnic conflict.

The [former] government's failure to provide services has led to conflict over resources.
 - Focus group participant, West Kordofan state

Establishing development projects in marginalized areas reduces the feeling of injustice, ends conflicts, and achieves peace.
 - Focus group participant, Gedaref state

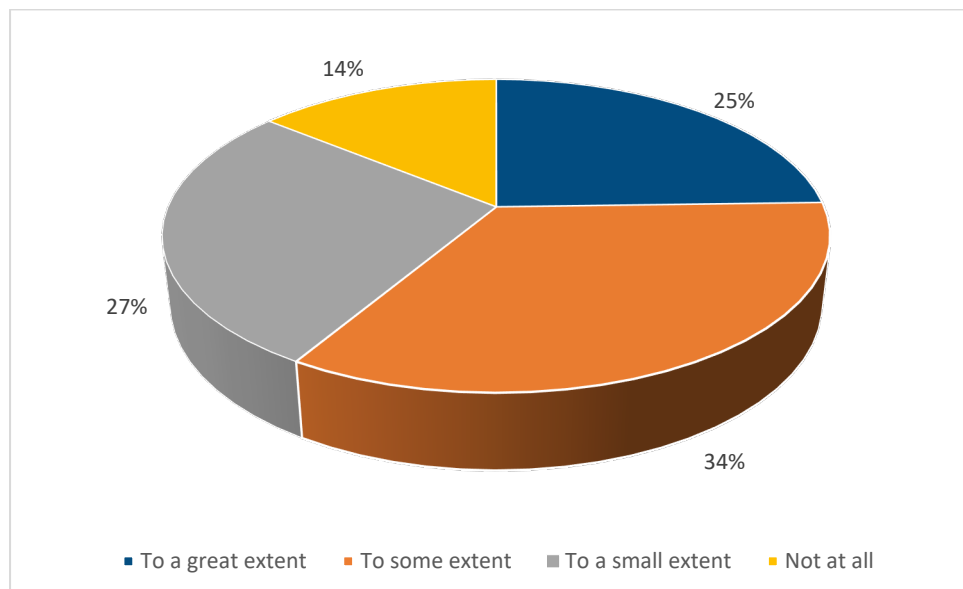
Society has become insecure, lacking both food security and general safety, and theft has increased as a natural result of the economic crisis.
 - Focus group participant, Gedaref state

Economic concerns could also lead to a corrective revolution.
 - Focus group participant, West Kordofan state

Access to the Transitional Government and Participation in the Transitional Process

A majority of youth representatives (59%) polled said the transitional government allows youth organizations like the ones they represent to have a say in the transition process to a “great” or “to some” extent. Roughly 41% said the transitional government does not allow youth organizations to have a say in the transition process, including 14% who said they have no voice at all. See Figure 13 for a summary of all of the views collected.

Figure 13: Level of Reported Influence on the Transitional Government



Access to the transitional government is the only area covered by the survey in which there is a noticeable deviation in the responses provided by representatives of resistance committees compared to those representing civil society organizations or the overall average. Most notably, when asked whether their respective organizations ever attempted to reach out to the government to make their views and observations heard, 55% of the overall respondents answered “yes,” compared to 74% of respondents representing resistance committees.

While some youth civil society and resistance committee representatives said that they have reached out to government officials and were welcomed, many expressed concerns that their viewpoints have been marginalized.

A focus group participant in River Nile state, describing her organization’s approach to engaging the government, is illustrative of views expressed nationwide. First, the group conducts internal meetings and develops draft documents. Next, they request a meeting with officials to present their ideas and discuss them, hoping that their recommendations will be accepted. Yet, she noted, after the series of meetings, “nothing is actually implemented.” She attributed this lack of action to either a lack of desire or a lack of capacity by government officials.

Another resistance committee representative described the committee’s approach to engaging government officials. First, members submit written notes to the government. Then, if they do not receive a response, they exert pressure, conducting vigils, marches, and street closures.

While public actions of this nature may bear positive results in some cases, focus group participants in other regions said they must seek new ways to pressure the government and hold transitional leaders accountable.

Focus group participants in several states suggested that the government form a youth parliament or commission, which would provide opportunities for youth to make their voices heard.

[The government is] interested in hearing youth views, but not in implementing their ideas.

- Focus group participant, White Nile state

To some extent, the transitional government is better than the previous government in hearing the views of young people.

- Focus group participant, Blue Nile state

To achieve justice, new and innovative means of pressure must be found other than the commonly used methods [sit-ins, processions]. A new method must be found through which we pressure politicians to achieve justice.

- Focus group participant, Kassala state

The government’s adoption of youth and women's conferences is the way to achieve effective monitoring, as youth cannot participate effectively without enlightenment.

- Focus group participant, Blue Nile state

Young people believe that to solve and confront challenges, it is necessary to raise the capabilities of youth and create youth leadership to be within the power structures [and] participate in decision-making.

- Focus group participant, Gedaref state

Increasing Youth Engagement in the Transitional Process

Across Sudan, the representatives of youth groups expressed a keen interest in engaging in their communities and participating in decision-making at the state and national levels:

Youth should be represented [in] all government institutions, especially on the legislative council and in the media, so they have representation and can help solve problems.

- Focus group participant, River Nile state

Young people have the desire for change and dream of the progress of the country, but they need more attention from the government of the revolution.

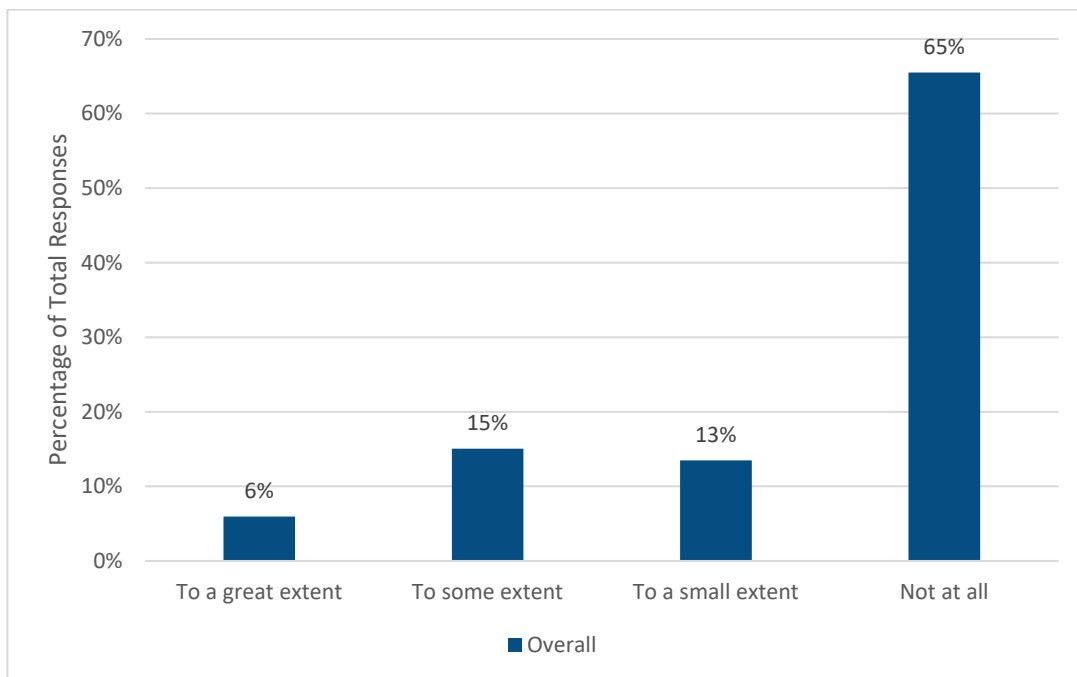
- Focus group participant, Gedaref state

Youth organizations can play different roles by spreading awareness in the community and contributing to helping the poor and needy, while the resistance committees can also play roles in effective monitoring through neighborhood committees.

- Focus group participant, River Nile state

Despite this strong level of interest, youth representing civil society organizations and resistance committees overwhelmingly report that they have not taken part in transitional government-led initiatives, been included in governance or decision-making, or had a role in peacemaking or constitution-drafting processes. Figure 14 shows respondents who said they had not participated in initiatives, if any, launched by the transitional government. Many focus group participants said that they were unaware of any such opportunities.

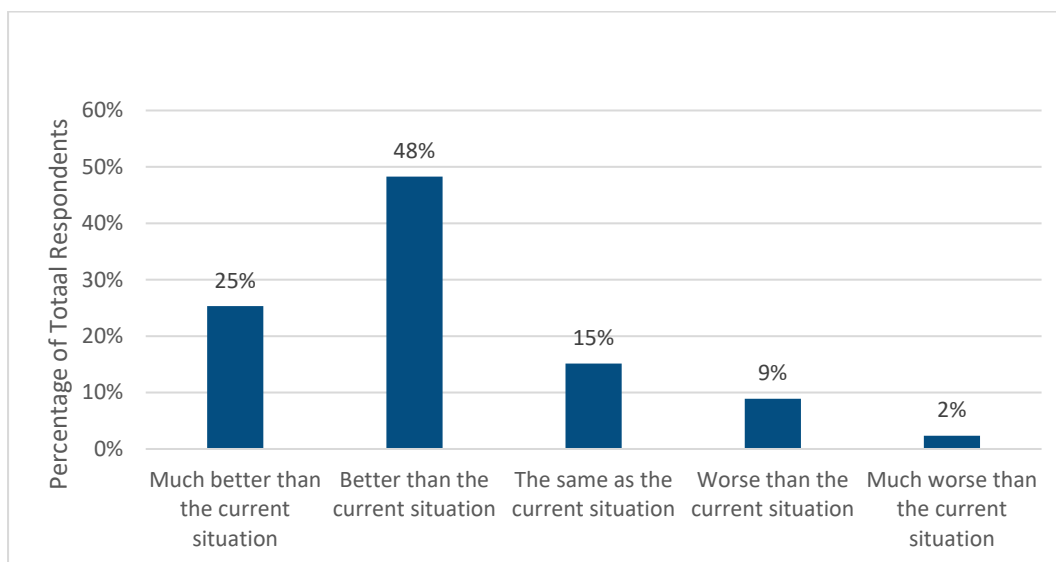
Figure 14: Youth Respondents' Stated Levels of Involvement with the Transitional Government



Will the Future be Better?

More than 70% of respondents, across all demographic categories and regions, reported that they and the members of their groups believe the future will either be “better” or “much better” than the current situation. See Figure 15 for details.

Figure 15: Youth Respondents’ Views of the Future of Sudan



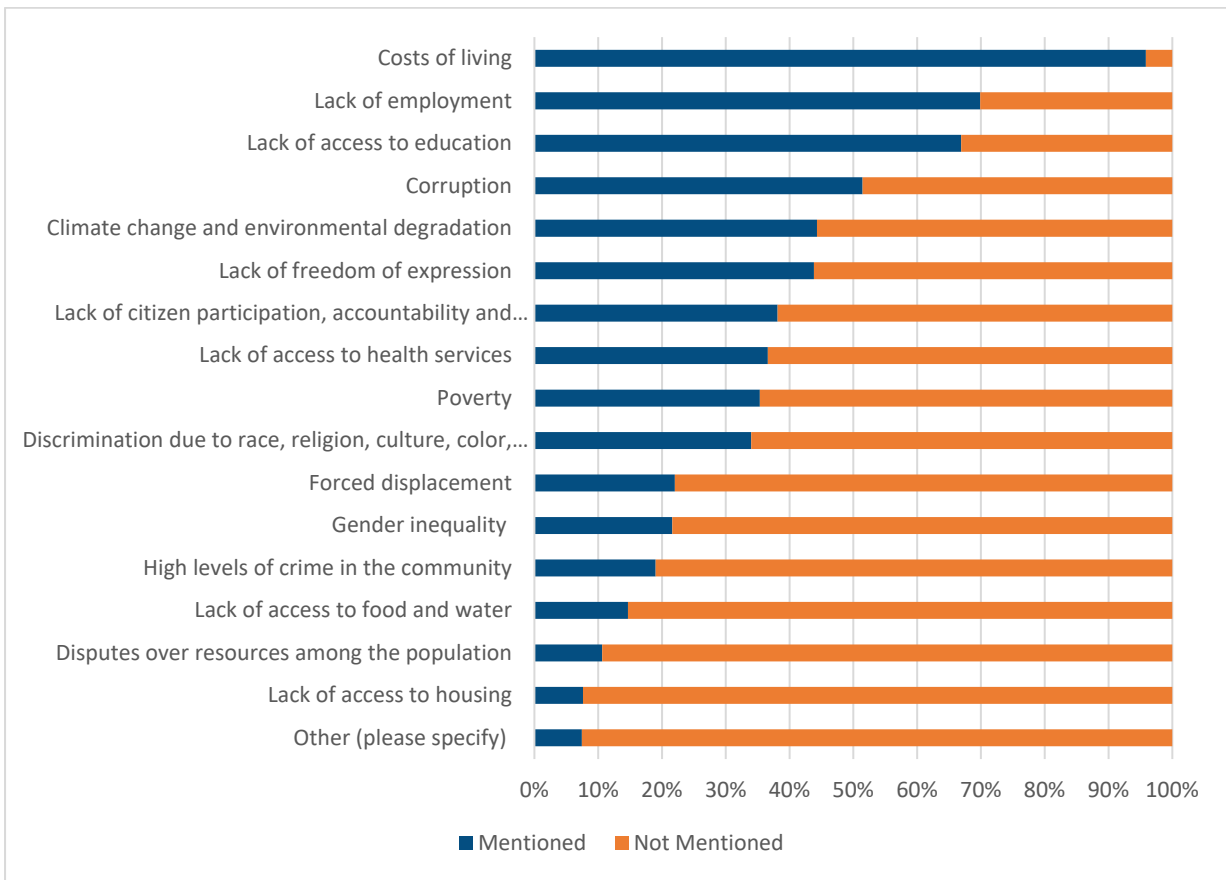
Views differed significantly by region. The region with the most positive views is Greater Darfur, where 85% of respondents felt optimistic about the future. Optimism peaks in South Darfur, where 100% of respondents responded positively. By contrast, optimism, while still high, is lower elsewhere. The regions of White Nile and North Kordofan (63% see the future as “better” or “much better”), South and West Kordofan (65%) and Khartoum state (70%) are the least positive regions.

Views on Current Challenges Faced by Youth

Survey respondents were asked what their respective organizations consider to be the five most significant challenges faced by Sudanese youth today. A list of 16 possible answers was provided, which included such things as the “economic situation and socioeconomic rights,” “climate change,” “gender issues,” “political rights,” and “disputes, crime, and corruption.”

The rising cost of living was by far the largest challenge cited by youth representatives; 96% of respondents, irrespective of their demographic background or location, listed it as the major obstacle facing youth. This observation is unsurprising. Sudan has faced significant inflation, which reached 363.1% in April 2021 when the survey was conducted, in addition to the devaluation of the pound in February and a significant reduction in government subsidies for fuel and basic commodities. Figure 16 summarizes the top priorities reported by the 1,023 youth representatives surveyed.

Figure 16: The Most Significant Challenges Facing Youth



Notably, “discrimination based on race, religion, culture, color, or gender” was seen as a significant challenge by slightly over 30% of the respondents. Although respondents were asked to respond on behalf of their organizations, this percentage varies significantly when disaggregated by gender. Approximately 48% of female respondents – 15% of those surveyed – cited discrimination as a key challenge, compared to 32% of all male respondents.

Attitudes Toward Peace, Conflict, and the Juba Peace Agreement

Views on the Centrality of Peace

“Peace, justice, freedom” was the slogan of the movement that led to the ouster of the al-Bashir regime. Survey respondents, as well as participants in one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions, spoke at length about peace. While they expressed a range of views about the concept of peace, most agreed that it represents coexistence, mutual acceptance, and the absence of armed conflict.

Peace entails the cessation of conflict in reality, and not the signing of a political agreement.

- Focus group participant, Sennar state

Peace is the absence of war and the fear that dominates everyone as a result of past experiences with war. It is security and stability.

- Focus group participant, Blue Nile state

Peace means the ideal state of happiness, freedom, love and a decent life.

- Focus group participant, Red Sea state

In interviews and focus group discussions, participants said their primary concern about peace is the need to accelerate the finalization and implementation of peace agreements. This concern was voiced in both conflict and non-conflict states. According to one focus group participant in River Nile, “the government needs to accelerate the completion of the comprehensive peace process.”

According to focus group participants in Khartoum, peace will bring stability, sustainable and balanced development, and a sense of self-security. Participants in North Kordofan and White Nile also stressed the economic benefits of peace because a reduction in security-related spending would allow for greater expenditure in development and domestic production.

In addition to the signing of peace agreements, focus group participants offered several recommendations to further the transition and achieve peace. In Blue Nile, participants suggested collecting weapons, providing compensation to victims of war, pursuing justice, and allowing refugees to return. In White Nile and River Nile, participants advocated for a more inclusive government.

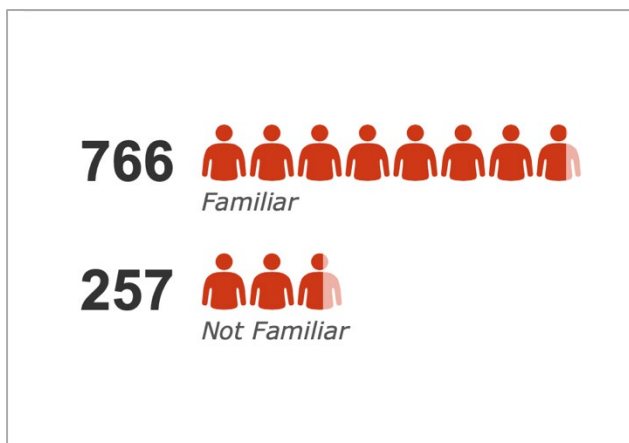
To achieve peace, all components of the society must be involved in the peace process, and the agreements concluded with peace partners and armed struggle movements must be preached, especially the Juba Peace Agreement.”

- Focus group participant, Red Sea state

Knowledge and Views of the Juba Peace Agreement

Given the centrality of peace in all discussions, it is perhaps unsurprising that many youth group representatives said they are “somewhat” or “very familiar” with the JPA, as demonstrated in Figure 17 below. Notably, respondents under the age of 30 admitted having less familiarity with the JPA than older respondents.

Figure 17: Familiarity with Juba Peace Agreement



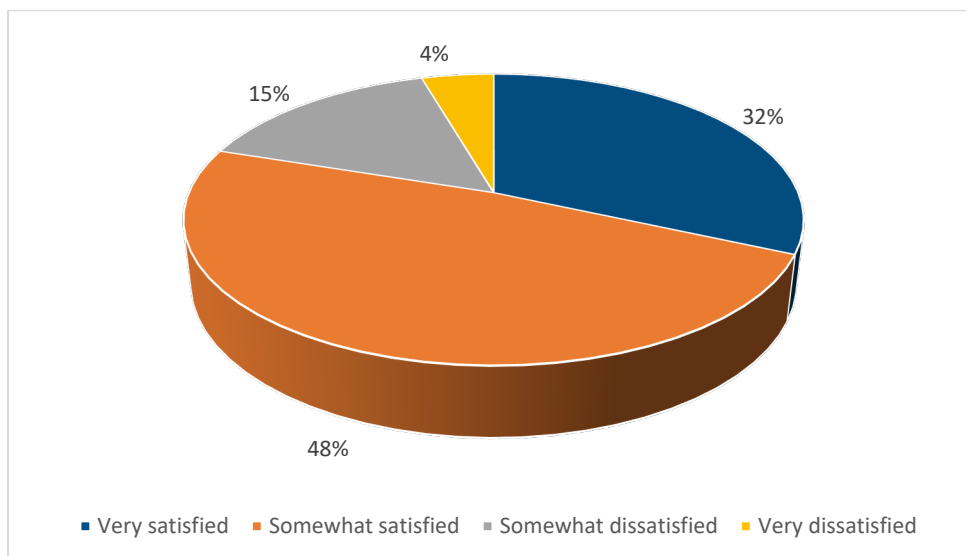
Despite these findings, in focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews, participants often demonstrated a lack of awareness of the provisions of the JPA. For example, some participants in focus groups commented that the JPA is not a comprehensive peace agreement. When asked about the issues it fails to cover, they often mentioned areas that are in fact addressed in the agreement, including the

return of internally displaced people, refugees, and returnees; autonomy for the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile; and transitional justice.

Views of the Government's Peacemaking Efforts and the JPA

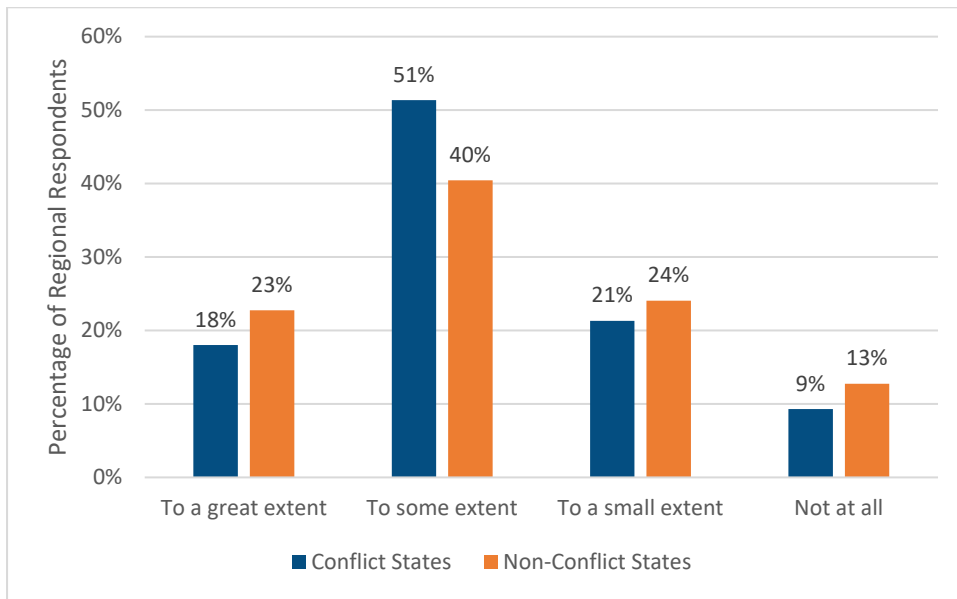
A large majority of youth representatives, whether in conflict or non-conflict states, expressed high levels of satisfaction with the government's peacemaking efforts, as demonstrated in Figure 18 below.

Figure 18: Satisfaction with the Transitional Government's Peace Efforts



Further, a majority of the respondents feel that the overall level of conflict in their community has decreased since the fall of al-Bashir. On average, 65% felt an increase in their personal security. The outlier is Khartoum, where nearly half of respondents (49%) reported a deterioration in their personal security. Figure 19 below summarizes youth respondents' views of their sense of personal security.

Figure 19: Respondents' Views on Improvements in Personal Security Since the Start of the Transitional



Attitudes Toward Transitional Justice and Accountability

The polling of youth from civil society organizations and resistance committees demonstrated an extremely high level of support for transitional justice—98% judged it “very important” or “somewhat important.” In conflict-impacted areas, 90% of respondents ranked the issue as “very important.”

We have not seen any clear measures to achieve justice, and we have justification for this slowness because we believe that the judicial institutions need to be restructured, which takes time.

- Focus group participant, Red Sea state

The government must provide peace and security, and this will only take place with transitional justice.

- Focus group participant, West Darfur state

The government is still covering the crimes of the former regime.

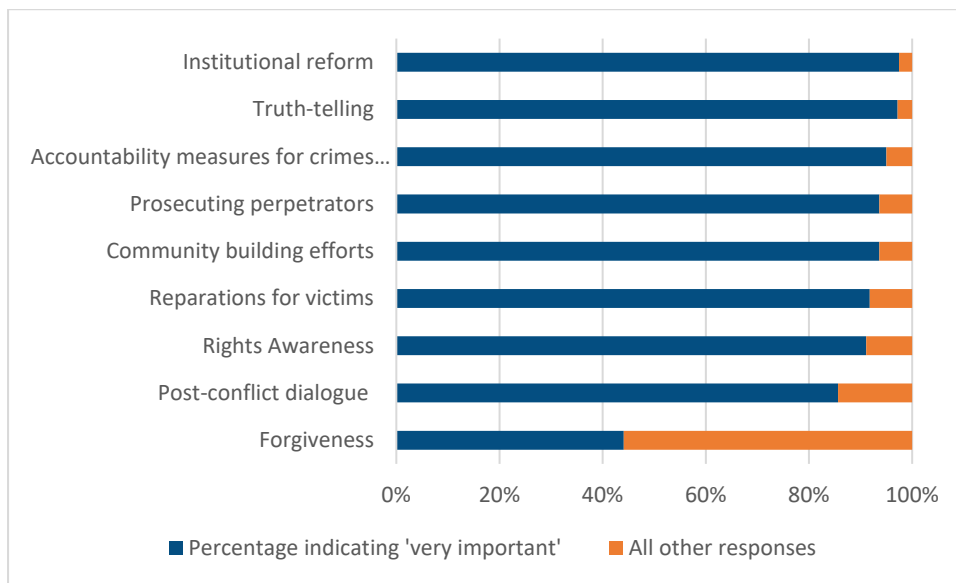
- Focus group participant, East Darfur state

The failure to achieve justice for the martyrs and the wounded and the failure to prosecute criminals is a major challenge for young people and disrupts their ability to contribute to supporting the transitional period.

- Focus group participant, Gezira state

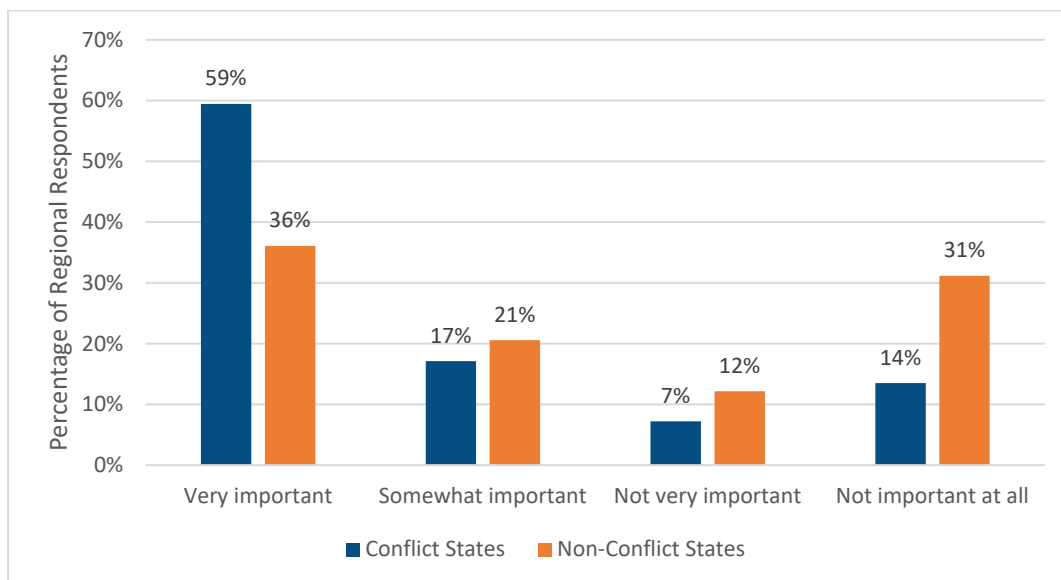
Those surveyed were asked to assess different types or avenues for achieving transitional justice. Figure 20 below summarizes their responses.

Figure 20: Views on Differing Mechanisms of Transitional Justice



Notably, of the nine avenues of transitional justice offered as choices in the survey, eight were rated as “very important” by over 85+% of respondents. Strikingly, “forgiveness” was rated as the least appealing method. Only 44% of the overall respondents said it is “very important,” while more than one-third said it is either “not very important,” or “not important at all.”⁹ These findings are shown in Figure 21 below.

Figure 21: Views on Forgiveness as an Avenue of Transitional Justice



⁹ Views of various forms of transitional justice, however, vary greatly by state and region. Three out of five respondents in conflict states said forgiveness is “very important.” In contrast, only approximately one in three said so in non-conflict areas. For example, youth activists in Greater Darfur were significantly more likely to rank forgiveness as “important” or “somewhat important” (89%) compared to other regional groupings, such as Khartoum (51%) and Eastern Sudan (56%).

An array of reasons may explain attitudes toward forgiveness. One explanation could be a lack of awareness, especially in non-conflict states, about forgiveness as a transitional justice measure. Another could be that the translation for the word “forgiveness” in Arabic (*al-Afow* العفو) can also be interpreted as “amnesty,” which may have discouraged support for the measure.¹⁰

Post-conflict dialogue ranked highly as an avenue for achieving transitional justice. This support spanned regions, conflict and non-conflict areas, types of youth-led groups, and sub-group age cohorts within the broad category of youth. In conflict-impacted states, 92% of respondents said it is “very important,” a 10-point difference (82%) with those in non-conflict states.

A large majority of youth surveyed (66%) indicated little to no familiarity with the Transitional Justice Commission mandated by Chapter 12, 38(5) of the Constitutional Charter, while only 10% indicated that they are “very familiar” with the commission. The highest rate of familiarity is in Eastern Sudan (46%), while the lowest rates are in Central Sudan and Blue Nile (17%).

When asked who could be trusted to lead initiatives toward national reconciliation and justice, respondents showed a generally high level of distrust. None of the potential options received more than about 20% support. Civil society and independent commissions received the highest percentages (21% and 20%, respectively), followed by “a new government elected by the people of Sudan,” with (18%). Religious leaders received the lowest level of support (1%). At the same time, only 1% of the respondents indicated they “do not trust anyone.”

Notably, in April, 7% of respondents said they trust the transitional government to lead initiatives toward national reconciliation and justice. Both an “international body” (15%) and a “new government elected by the people of Sudan” enjoyed greater confidence among youth.

Attitudes Toward Democracy and Governance Issues

Survey respondents expressed an expansive understanding of democracy, emphasizing the importance of civil liberties and fundamental rights, justice, peace, and representative government, as indicated by the following:

¹⁰ A notable exception is Greater Darfur. In Greater Darfur, 71% of respondents said it is very important for perpetrators to ask victims for forgiveness. Forgiveness may rank higher in Darfur because community leaders mention it frequently.

Democracy is:

The state of citizenship that is based on the principle of duties and rights and respecting other opinions.

- Focus group participant, Kassala state

Democracy means the rule of the people by the people for the benefit of the people.

- Focus group participant, Red Sea state

An affirmation of freedoms for the individual, respect for minority rights, respect for human rights and a matter [and is a matter that is] concerned with peace and development, transparency of elections, and justice.

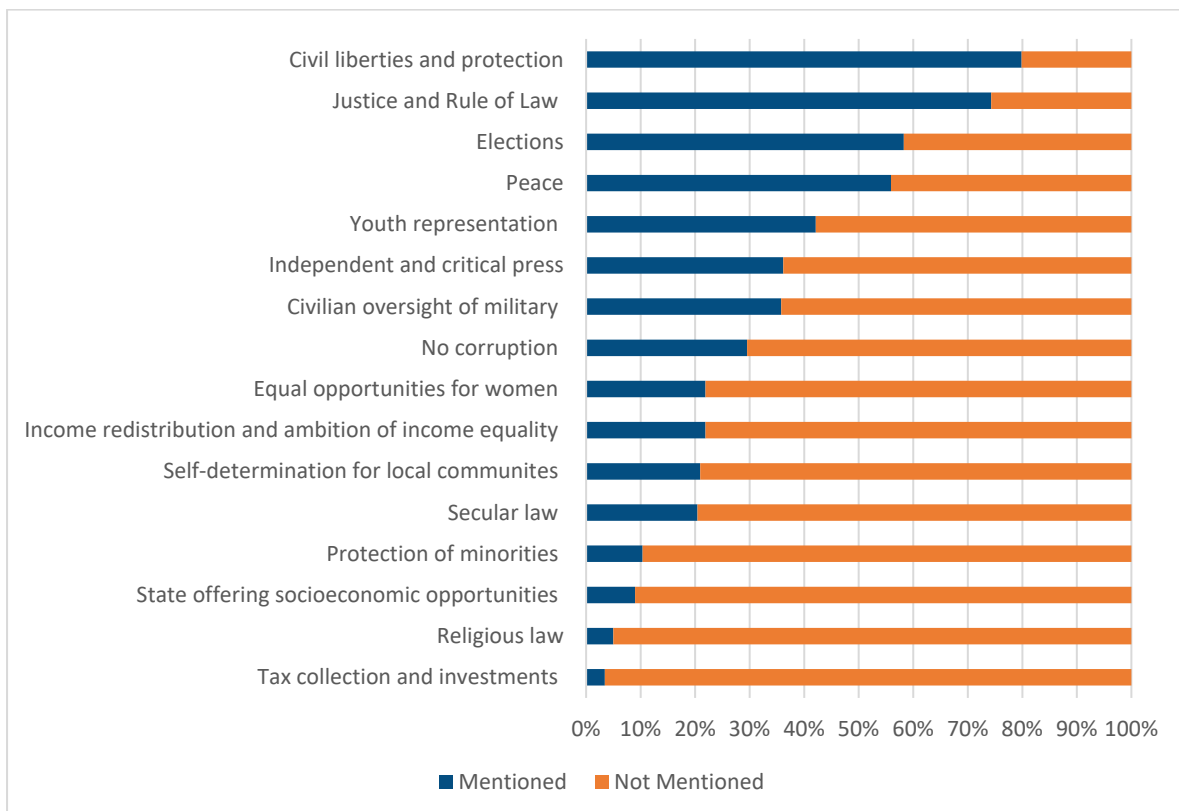
- Focus group participant, North Kordofan state

Acceptance of the opinion of the majority, and respect for the opinion of the minority.

- Focus group participant, White Nile state

When asked to choose the most important features of democracy from among 16 possible responses, almost four out of five of respondents nationwide (80%) selected the protection of civil liberties. Justice and rule of law (74%), elections (58%), peace (56%), and youth representation (42%) scored next highest.

Figure 22: Respondents' Ranking of Democracy and Governance Issues



Attitudes Toward Elections

Survey respondents consistently ranked elections lower in importance than other aspects of democratic governance. Qualitative research suggests that these sentiments reflect the legacy of the al-Bashir regime, during which elections were organized amidst armed conflict, rather than a lack of support for democratic polls per se. Focus group participants said credible elections are “a defining characteristic of an effective democracy.”

Despite their importance, survey respondents were divided on whether free elections will take place as anticipated in 2024. Fifty percent said they believe to a “great” or “some” extent that free elections will take place. The other half said that they have “little” to “no confidence” that this will happen. Sixty-three percent of respondents who expressed optimism about the achievement of the goals of the revolution believe elections will be held according to the planned timetable; by contrast, 36% of those with negative views on progress towards the goals of the revolution were optimistic that elections would occur on time.

In response to an open-ended survey question, respondents provided a nuanced understanding of these findings, citing several potential challenges to holding democratic elections. Concerns ranged from “failing to hold elections and returning power to the people” to the possibility that elections would be fraudulent or exclusionary, or that youth would be largely sidelined in the voting process. Some participants expressed concern about the length of the transition and whether it provides enough time for the transitional government to achieve the goals of the revolution. Others worried that a long timeline could allow elements of the former regime to disrupt the transition or elections. Participants expressed concern about the possibility that a military coup or clashes between the military and civilian parts of the government could also upset the election timetable.

In addition to democratic elections, focus group participants link an inclusive drafting process for a permanent constitution to the country’s long-term stability.

A new constitution that reflects citizens, their visions, and their views of the state is one of the most important factors for Sudan’s future peace and state stability.

- Focus group participant, Blue Nile state

Youth should be included in the drafting of a new constitution.

- Focus group participant, North Darfur state

We aspire to participate, as youth, in drafting the constitution of Sudan and we hope that the constitution defines our identity as Sudanese and delineates the borders of our state.

- Focus group participant, Kassala State

Many focus group participants underscored the need to restructure Sudan’s traditional political parties and/or establish new political entities. This restructuring would provide stronger opportunities for youth engagement in constitution-draft, the TLC, and constitutional commissions.

Surveyed Youths' Perceptions of Women and Gender-Related Issues

Overall, youth were largely positive that the transitional period and government will help improve the situation for women. Nearly three-fourths of respondents (74%) said improved conditions for women were likely to a “great extent” or to “some extent.”¹¹

Given that survey respondents were asked to respond on behalf of their organizations, it is difficult to extrapolate gendered perceptions from the data. Despite this, 15% of total respondents were female. When disaggregated by gender, women’s views generally aligned with those of male respondents. Their responses, however, differed on some issues. For example, female respondents were nearly three times more likely than their male counterparts to indicate that “equal opportunities for women” are an important feature of democracy (49% vs. 18%). Female respondents were again nearly three times more likely than male respondents to say that “gender equality” should be among the transitional government’s priorities (12% vs. 36% respectively). Female youth representatives also reported less trust than their male counterparts that national elections scheduled in 2024 would be held. Over 60% of female respondents indicated that they believe “not at all” or only “to a small extent” that the elections would take place on time, compared to 49% of male respondents.

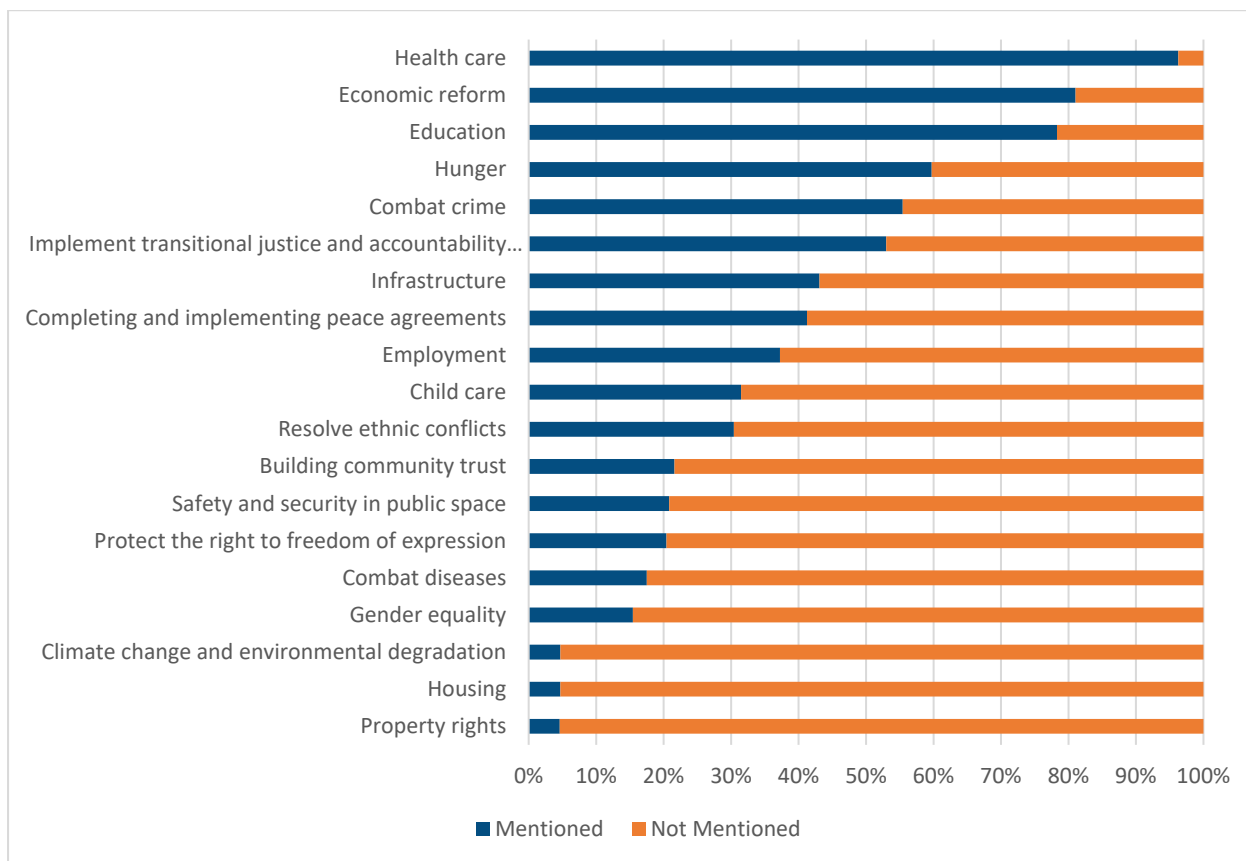
Opinions on Priorities during the Transition

When asked to rank the top five issues that should be addressed during the transition, respondents prioritized those that most impact everyday life—healthcare, employment, education, and combatting crime. These findings are in line with the country’s current challenges: a deteriorating economic situation, an increase in crime, and an acute health situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other diseases.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (96%) indicated healthcare as a key priority, while nearly four out of five respondents said economic reform and education figure among their priorities. The fourth and fifth most recurring top issues were hunger and combating crime.

¹¹ Of the 1,023 survey respondents, 15% were women, one-third of whom were concentrated in Khartoum. There is a five-point difference between female and male respondents on this question of improved conditions for women (75% vs. 70%, respectively).

Figure 23: Views of Respondents on Transitional Priorities



Notably, respondents from Khartoum state emphasized the “implementation of the transitional justice and accountability measures for crimes against humanity and war crimes” far more than respondents elsewhere. More than three-quarters of Khartoum state respondents listed transitional justice as a top-five priority, compared with less than half of respondents in the rest of the country. It is not clear why Khartoum respondents would prioritize transitional justice more than other areas of Sudan, particularly conflict-impacted states.

More than one in three women surveyed listed gender equality as one of the top five priorities, as opposed to less than one in eight men. Overall, gender equality was among the lower-ranking answers (16th of 19 possible options), prioritized by only 15% of respondents nationwide. Female focus group participants in Red Sea state, representing women’s organizations, expressed frustration with society’s lack of acceptance of women’s organizations and the presence of women in political organizations.

The lack of awareness of women’s issues among women themselves is one of the biggest challenges facing actors in the field of women’s issues.
 - Female focus group participant, Blue Nile state

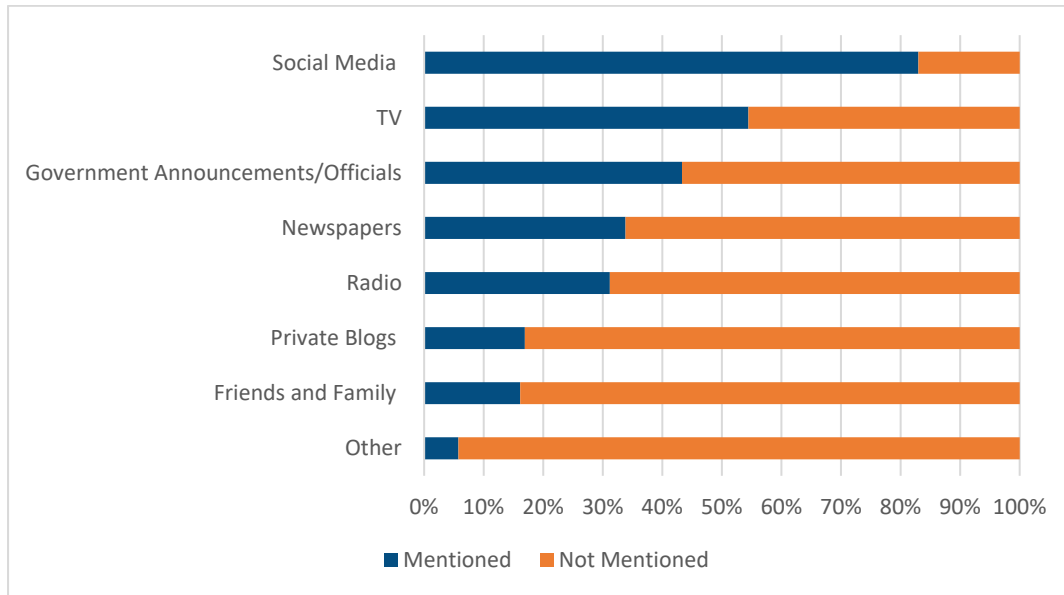
Women can play a distinctive role, because they are influential in some societies.
 - Female focus group participant, River Nile state

Climate change and environmental degradation were consistently among the least important priorities for respondents, irrespective of geographic and demographic considerations.

Youth, Access to Information, and Capacity-Building for Advocacy

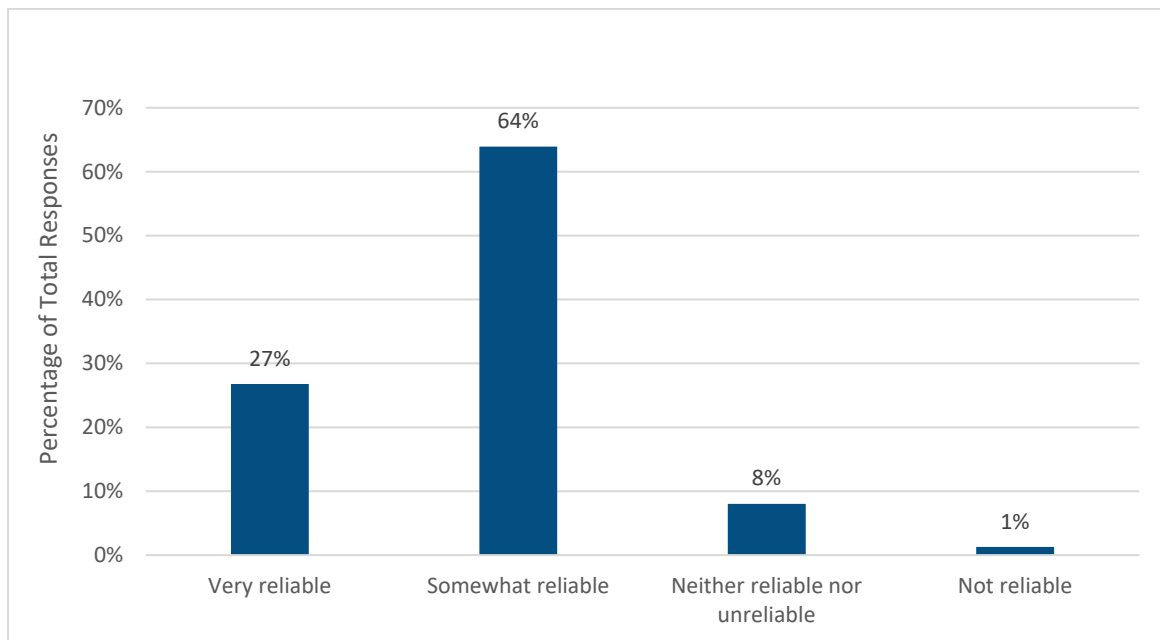
Most youth surveyed receive information via social media, as demonstrated in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Reported Sources for Obtaining Information on the Transitional Period



Further, most consider social media reliable.

Figure 25: Reported Reliability of Information Received



Youth’s access to information is highly relevant because, when asked to choose from a list of seven options that would bolster the capacity of their members to engage effectively, respondents highly ranked options related to communications outreach and advocacy.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents listing public speaking as “very” or “somewhat” important. Similarly, almost four out of five respondents indicated that social media training is either “somewhat” or “very” important. Interest in traditional media training is also significant; 74% of respondents indicated it is “somewhat important” or “very important.”

These requests take on additional importance because more than 90% of respondents placed high trust in social media. Training would not only increase capacities but also help combat risks of mis- and dis-information, along with helping to prevent hate speech and allowing for early warning of potential conflicts.

Respondents’ interest in media training was matched by their equally high interest in learning how to access information and improving their knowledge of whom to contact to share their views. Both options were rated as “very” or “somewhat” important by 90% of respondents.

CONCLUSION: ENHANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN THE TRANSITION

Survey results highlight important trends among youth that are encouraging, but also provide early warning to transition officials that there are gaps in how youth engage in and feel about the transition that, if not managed properly, could create significant obstacles to the transition. On a positive note, 70% of survey respondents report continued high hopes for the transitional period. Additionally, a majority of youth expressed measured confidence in the transitional government; a large percentage strongly supports the transitional government's peacemaking efforts and has a positive outlook on their future.

While a majority feel able to influence the transitional government, 42% of the youth representatives surveyed said that their organizations have little to no voice in the transition process. Of these, 14% believe they have no influence at all. Activists in focus groups expressed frustration that their opinions are heard, but often not valued or acted upon when they have tried to communicate with policymakers. Youth engagement is largely limited to street protests, social media posting, local-level activities, and relatively atomized action by small coalitions. Youth representatives from resistance committees and civil society organizations consistently report their sense of a lack of input on key economic, peacemaking, and governance issues.

Respondents recognized dramatic improvements in respect for the human rights of the Sudanese people. However, the goals of the revolution remain largely aspirational for nearly half of those surveyed, and 5% have said they have been met "to a great extent." Youth interviewed cited concerns about the transition's progress in forming the TLC and other institutions mandated by the Constitutional Charter, as well as the government's ability to address everyday challenges, including the economy and provision of basic services.

In addition, youth attitudes differ in conflict versus non-conflict areas; respondents in certain areas may not have yet experienced the dividends of the government's peacemaking efforts. Youth respondents in Khartoum state were nearly 20 percentage points less likely (36%) than those outside of Khartoum (55%) to express satisfaction with the transitional government as compared to the previous regime in terms of service delivery, responsiveness, and overall performance.

Across regions—and despite diverging views on other issues—youth representatives from resistance committees and civil society organizations consistently reported that the government should prioritize addressing unemployment, the rising cost of living, and basic service provision, including electricity, education, and health care. Survey respondents expressed strong interest in training—on public communication, social media, and the constitutional and peace-making processes—to allow them to effectively conduct advocacy and participate more fully in the transition. They overwhelmingly stressed the need for transitional justice.

These findings underscore both the goodwill among youth to support the transition as well as the fragility of that support. In the absence of democratic institutions to collect views, provide feedback to local communities, and tackle grassroots priorities, it may prove challenging for the

transitional government to gauge shifting public attitudes accurately and respond to these burgeoning concerns.

Taking advantage of this well of energy will require opening new avenues for youth participation and increasing interaction between youth and local, regional, and national decision-makers. Such steps hold the potential to provide a ballast to the transition, avoiding a waning of broad-based support, particularly as the process faces significant challenges posed by the economic situation, peacemaking, and governance reform. Perhaps as importantly, the currently circumscribed role for youth reduces information flows between the grassroots level and government officials. Enhancing the place of youth in Sudan's historic transition would not only help steady the current process, but also strengthen the groundwork for sustainable change in the years to come.

Based on these findings, The Carter Center recommends efforts, such as the recommendations below, that support the transitional leadership in developing official means of engaging youth and incorporating their perspectives as well as in communicating progress on the transition and its challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the government of Sudan:

- *Accelerate interaction with youth and proactively provide channels for their engagement with government policymaking.*

Youth representatives from more than 1,000 groups overwhelmingly indicated that are not involved in decision-making at the national or local levels.

The transitional government should consider intensifying its efforts to include youth in its deliberations, through mechanisms such as town halls, online forums, and informational caravans that target youth; outreach to youth communities and organizations through designated envoys; the establishment of youth councils; invitations to participate in government discussions touching on youth interests; and the specific consideration of youth in peace- and constitution-making.

A broad public communication campaign targeting youth, which would need to be conducted primarily through social media, would reduce information gaps and ensure realistic expectations about the transition.

- *Prioritize outreach and communication about the transitional government's priorities and accomplishments, including informing the public about the details of peace agreements and expected peace dividends.*

There is a broad recognition of the government's peacemaking efforts. Youth in non-conflict areas, however, reported less support for these efforts than those from conflict areas, a potential threat to support for the transitional government's emphasis on peacemaking. The transitional government should consider a campaign to explain to youth nationwide—particularly in non-conflict areas—the anticipated benefits of these agreements and the impact on their respective communities.

The surveys clearly indicate that unemployment and the increasing cost of living are the top priorities for youth. These concerns may further jeopardize youth's fragile support for the transitional government, which remained at slightly above 50% as of April 2021. Without the prospect of material improvements, youth support for the transitional government, the transitional process, and peacemaking will remain fragile and could wane amidst continuing economic hardship.

- *Establish the institutions mandated by the Constitutional Charter that offer avenues for youth engagement.*

The failure to establish the Transitional Legislative Council as of the writing of this report means that there are few avenues for youth to participate in government decision-making that shapes the transitional period. The transitional government should establish the TLC

and other commissions anticipated by the charter and actively promote the participation of youth within them.

- *Include youth from both conflict and non-conflict areas in peacemaking efforts.*

As surveys indicated, youth from conflict-impacted areas are absent from the implementation of the JPA, the negotiations with the SPLA-N (al-Hilu), and potential discussions with the Sudan Liberation Army (al-Nur), all of which they wish to see accelerated. To build sustainable peace in Sudan, current negotiations should be accelerated and youth representatives, including youth from non-conflict areas, should participate in these discussions.

- *Encourage civil society stakeholders and independent commissions to play key parts in transitional justice.*

Support for transitional justice is overwhelming among youth, yet there are few bodies youth trust to tackle this imperative. Civil society and independent commissions appear to be the most trusted bodies. The transitional government should consider a framework for transitional justice that places civil society and independent commissions at the heart of the effort.

To civil society, political parties, and other Sudanese stakeholders:

- *Ensure adequate representation of young women and men in political party structures and candidate lists.*

Given the large percentage of youth in Sudan's population, political parties and leaders should ensure adequate representation of young women and men in political party structures on all levels and increase opportunities for youth to engage in politics or run for office.

- *Take the lead in establishing a framework for transitional justice issues.*

Civil society and independent commissions garner the most trust from youth to undertake transitional justice initiatives. Credible, inclusive coalitions of civil society actors could serve as the driving force behind transitional justice efforts.

To the international community:

- *Support initiatives engaging youth in the transitional period.*

After a long period of disenfranchisement, young Sudanese women and men are keenly interested in being included in decision-making related to the transition and in actively contributing to building the peaceful, democratic foundations of the Sudan in which they aspire to live. International stakeholders should encourage greater youth engagement at the local, state, and national levels.

- *Support nationwide initiatives that bring youth in conflict and non-conflict areas together.*

Despite the goodwill generated by the revolution and the onset of the transition, significant gaps in perceptions remain between youth in conflict and non-conflict zones and between “central” and “peripheral” areas. To sustain the transition and Sudan’s peaceful, democratic future, increasing interaction among youth nationwide is critical. Linkages between youth should be fostered that allow them to share actions and raise their collective voice on common priorities.

ANNEX 1 – PROGRAM STAFF

SUDAN

COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE (*acting*)

MAYMOONA EL-TAYEB

HEAD OF PEACE PROGRAMS

GUMA KUNDA KOMEY

DEPUTY HEAD OF PEACE PROGRAMS – PROGRAM LEAD

BUTHAINA EL-NAIEM

DEPUTY HEAD OF PEACE PROGRAMS – STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS

SHERIF ALAA

SENIOR ADVISOR

MOHAMED OSMAN

PROGRAM AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

ANAS ABUEL GASIM

FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION, AND OFFICE MANAGER

MOJTABA AN-NAIM

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

MOMENA KHALIL

SURVEY MANAGERS, DATA COLLECTORS AND DATA CLEANERS

Abd Alhameed Ahmed Abd Elhameed Mohamed

Abdalla Adam Yassen Mohammed

Ahmed Abd Elaal Omer Abbas

Ahmed Tom Hemdeadan Dawd

Alhussain Jaffer Ahmed

Ameen Ahmed Mohammed Adam

Awdallah Hussin Mohammed Hamed

Bakri Ismail Ahmed Hammad

Elmois Basher Ahmad Basher

Fatima Esmail Elkheir Adam

Fawzia Mohammed Ali Ahmed Elshaeb

Hassan Abdallah Hassan Abdallah

Huziefa Yasser

Isam Bushara Mohammed Kabier

Maram Elsadig Awad

Mohamed Abbas Mohammed Barka

Mohamed Hatem Ismail

Mohamed Ismail Abdalrhman Ismail

Muhammed Musa Ibrahim Abd Allah

Nawal Musa Adam Mohamed

Nazereldeen Adam Khalil

Nezar Mohamed Ebrahim Albadawi

Nihad Adil Mahmoud Yousif

Omer Elzain Yousif Ahmed
Razan Fatthi Mustafa Mohammed
Safia Elsiddig Awadalkareem Mohamed
Sara Hassan Ahmed
Sawsan Gomah Mussa
Sharf Eldin Yousif Adam Yahia
Sulima Issa Ramadan Mohamed
Tahani Adam Sad'an Monuar

ATLANTA

CEO, THE CARTER CENTER

PAIGE ALEXANDER

VICE PRESIDENT, PEACE PROGRAMS

BARBARA J. SMITH

DIRECTOR, CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM

STACIA GEORGE

DIRECTOR, DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

DAVID CARROLL

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT

MERCEDES SPROUSE

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM

JOHN GOODMAN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

SARAH JOHNSON

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM

TOM CRICK

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS

SOYIA ELLISON

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

JAYANTHI NARAIN

SENIOR PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

BENJAMIN SPEARS

SURVEY ANALYST

AMEER CHUGHTAI

PROGRAM ASSISTANT

MERISSA COPE

FINANCIAL ANALYST

RUBY JUDIT-KOCHENDERFER

PROGRAM INTERN

TARA HOCH, ANDERSON SCOTT

ANNEX 2 – SUDAN’S INTERNATIONAL TREATY COMMITMENTS

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	Ratified/Acceeded	June 19, 2013
African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights	Ratified/Acceeded	Feb. 18, 1986
African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption	Signed	June 30, 2008
African Youth Charter	Signed	June 30, 2008
First Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women	Signed	June 30, 2008
Arab Charter on Human Rights	Signed	May 22, 2004
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Ratified/Acceeded	April 24, 2009
Convention on the Rights of the Child	Ratified/Acceeded	Aug. 3, 1990
International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Ratified/Acceeded	March 21, 1977
U.N. Convention Against Corruption	Ratified/Acceeded	Sept. 5, 2014
Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties	Ratified/Acceeded	April 18, 1990
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Ratified/Acceeded	March 18, 1986
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Ratified/Acceeded	March 18, 1986

ANNEX 3 – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Resistance Committee Mapping Survey

1. Where is the resistance committee located?
2. Please specify in which locality/administrative unit?
3. Please indicate the number of resistance committees in the administrative unit?
4. What is the name of the district to which the committee belongs?
5. What is the name of the coordination to which the district belongs?

Youth Organization Mapping Survey

1. What is the name of the organization you represent?
2. Is the organization led by a man or a woman?
3. Where is the organization located? (State)
4. Where is the organization located? (Region)
5. Please specify in which locality/administrative unit
6. What type of organization do you represent?
7. How many members does the organization currently have?
8. What is the primary focus of the organization?
9. Is the organization registered?

YCO Survey

1. Is the organization led by a man or a woman?
2. How old are you?
3. What is the name of the organization you represent?
4. Where is the organization located? (Region)
5. Where is the organization located? (State)
6. Please specify in which locality/administrative unit.
7. What type of organization do you represent?
8. How many members does the organization currently have?
9. What is the primary focus of the organization?
10. How are the organization's leaders appointed
11. How often does the organization appoint new leaders?
12. Is the organization registered?
13. Where do you obtain funding?
14. Which of the following issues does your organization consider to be the 5 most significant challenges faced by youth today?
15. To what extent does your organization consider the personal security of youth to have improved since the revolution?
16. To what extent does your organization consider the level of conflict in the community to have improved since the revolution?
17. How would you describe how the youth sees the future ahead of them?
18. To what extent does your organization think that the goals of the revolution have been achieved?
19. Please elaborate on your answer.
20. How familiar would you say your organization is with the Constitutional Charter governing the transitional period?

21. Is your organization familiar with the main transitional government bodies?
22. If yes, can you please name the main transitional government bodies?
23. Is your organization familiar with the timetable set out for the transitional period?
24. If yes, please provide your answers in months
25. Is your organization aware of any programs and interventions focused on young people offered by the transitional government?
26. How familiar is your organization with the Transitional Justice Commission, which will be established according to the Constitutional Charter, and other transitional justice actions?
27. How familiar is your organization with the Juba agreement for peace which was signed in October 2020?
28. To what extent does your organization believe that the transitional government's plan for free election in 2021 will be complied with?
29. How satisfied is your organization with the overall performance of the transitional government compare with before the revolution considering services like education, health, police, access to justice and the general responsiveness of the government?
30. To what extent is your organization satisfied with the Constitutional Charter as the overall framework for the transition including the amendments?
31. How satisfied is your organization with how the main transitional government bodies have been established according to the timetable set out by the Constitutional Charter?
32. How satisfied is your organization with the transitional government's efforts to establish peace?
33. To what extent do you consider your organization to have access to relevant information regarding the constitution-drafting process?
34. To what extent would you say the transitional government allows youth organization like the one you represent to have a say in the transition process?
35. Do you know who your organization could address in order to make your views and observations regarding the transition process known?
36. To what extent does your organization believe that the transitional government will improve the situation for women?
37. To what extent does your organization believe that the transitional government will improve the situation for youth?
38. Which of the following features would your organization consider the most important features of democracy?
39. Which of the following issues would your organization consider to be the 5 most important for the transitional government to address?
40. How does your organization receive information about the transitional government's affairs?
41. How reliable do you judge that information to be?
42. Has the organization you represent ever attempted to reach out to the transitional government in order to make your views and observations heard?
43. If yes, please specify through which medium?
44. Is your organization participating in initiatives and projects launched by the transitional government to bring young people into the constitution-drafting

- and/or transitional process?
45. How would you rate the organization's access to information regarding how to voice your views and opinions towards the transitional government?
 46. Please describe the importance of the following needs in order for your organization to be able to express your views and observations regarding the transitional government and transitional process?
 - a. Knowledge about where to find relevant information
 - b. Knowledge of who to contact with your views and inputs
 - c. Safety and security of your organization's members
 - d. Better access to internet
 - e. Social media training
 - f. Traditional media training
 - g. Public speech training
 47. Does your organization have any concerns regarding the transitional process?
 48. Please list 3 main concerns your organization has regarding the transitional period.
 49. To what extent does your organization consider the following measures to be needed in order to bring about justice and reconciliation?
 - a. Post-conflict dialogue
 - b. Community building efforts
 - c. Truth-telling
 - d. Providing the people of Sudan with awareness of victims' rights
 - e. Reparations for victims
 - f. Institutional reform
 - g. Prosecuting perpetrators
 - h. Accountability measures for crimes against humanity and war crimes
 - i. Perpetrators must ask for forgiveness from victims
 50. Who do you think can be trusted to lead initiatives towards national reconciliation and justice?
 51. Please list 3 ways your organization would like to see youth participate in bringing about national reconciliation and justice