

Armed Conflict and Violation of Children's Rights in Sudan

ADEBAJO Adeola Aderayo (PhD),

Department of Political Science

Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun

adebajoa@tasued.edu.ng/adebajoade@gmail.com

Olileanya Amuche Ezugwu (Covenant University)

Akinsola Alameen Abolade

Department of Political Science

Federal College of Education, Abeokuta

Oyebajo Temitope Damilola

Chrisland University, Abeokuta

toyebajo@chrislanduniversity.edu.ng.

OLADOYE Ebenezer Blessing

Tai Solarin Federal University of Education

Oladoyeeb@tasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Armed conflict in Sudan has generated persistent and widespread violations of children's rights, including recruitment and use by armed groups, displacement, denial of education, and exposure to violence. Adopting structural violence theory, the paper interrogated the nature and drivers of child rights violations in Sudan. The desk research method was utilised in obtaining data. The paper analysed how protracted conflict in Sudan caused by weak governance, poverty, displacement, among others, heighten children's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. It further argued that children in conflict-affected areas in Sudan are exposed to forced recruitment, sexual exploitation, death, lack of education and limited access to protection services. The paper recommended resolution of the violent conflict in Sudan, investing in community-based resilience programmes, particularly education and livelihood support, to reduce children's susceptibility to recruitment by the warring parties. It recommended the resolution of the conflict, the need to protect schools as safe spaces, strengthening national legislation criminalizing child recruitment, alongside training military and security forces on child rights. In addition, effective monitoring and reporting of violations through established international mechanisms are crucial for accountability.

Keywords: armed conflict, children's right, human displacement, human rights, Sudan.

Introduction

Sudan was a co-protectorate of Egypt and the United Kingdom during the first part of the twentieth century. The arrangement, referred to as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, bestowed the British predominant governmental and military authority (Warburg, 1993). In 1956, Egypt and the United Kingdom signed a treaty surrendering their authority to the autonomous Republic of Sudan. A particularly alarming issue was the evident internal schism

(Shaffer, 1966) inside the nation, characterised by a clear distinction between the affluent northern area, mostly inhabited by Arab Muslims, and the underdeveloped southern region, where the large part of population are Christians or animists

Sudan is one of the African counties that have experienced violent conflicts and successful coups since its independence in 1956 causing political instability, social unrest and humanitarian crisis (Zibeir, 2024). It witnessed the first civil war in 1955, caused by agitation for Southern regional autonomy which lasted till 1972 leading to loss of about half a million lives (Zibeir, 2024). The second war occurred between 1983 and 2005 causing about 500,000 deaths and fragmentation with South Sudan seceding in 2011 (Zibeir, 2024).

On April 15, 2023, an armed struggle for control erupted in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, between the two primary factions of the reigning military regime, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which serves as the official army of Sudan, and a competing paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). According to the United Nations (2023), there were a minimum of 200 fatalities and 1,800 individuals sustained injuries as of 18 April. The outbreak of violence ensued due to escalating tensions among Sudan's most influential military leaders. In October 2021, the generals collaborated to carry out a coup d'état. In 2019, the RSF, consisting of former militias from the Darfur conflict (2003-2020), allied with the Sudanese army to depose Sudan's long-standing ruler, Omar al-Bashir which resulted in the establishment of a government that shares power between civilians and the military. In 2021, the military and the RSF used the political disputes among civilian factions as a justification to assume complete control over the government (Khalafallah, 2025). Subsequent discussions over the integration of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) into the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) ultimately resulted in conflicts. The primary cause of the confrontations was the absence of consensus over the entity that wielded final authority over the fighters.

It is important to note that between 1989 and 2019, Omar al-Bashir regime was characterised by political repression, arbitrary arrests, detention without trial and torture of political oppositions. There was an allegation of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity committed by National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) during Omar-al-Bashir regime. Also, government forces and allies particularly Janjaweed committed atrocities with impunity including rape, mass killing of women and children, displacement of

civilians prompting International Criminal Court pronouncing Omar al-Bashir as committing crimes against humanity.

The issue of child rights has been universally acknowledged and discussed via the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was established by the United Nations and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in 1989. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was formally accepted in 1989 and has been officially endorsed by 194 nations, including all United Nations member states, with the exception of Somalia and the United States. This agreement specifically emphasises the rights of those who are below the age of 18, granting minors the same fundamental human rights as adults. The justification for implementing the CRC is based on the fact that children, unlike most adults, need specific attention and safeguarding owing to their heightened susceptibility resulting from their physical dimensions, physical capabilities, and overall incomplete developmental stage. The CRC also addressed concerns related to child maltreatment and abuse, including neglect, aggression, or exploitation (Petersen, et al., 2016).

UNICEF (2013) reports that a significant number of children around the globe experience violence, abuse, and exploitation. Consequently, the implementation of the CRC has not yet provided complete protection for children. Not only have millions of children already fallen victim, but millions more are also vulnerable due to insufficient protection against violence.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept Armed Conflict

Armed conflict refers to a situation in which organised violence is used by state or nonstate actors to pursue political, territorial, ideological, or economic objectives, resulting in sustained hostilities and significant humanitarian consequences. In contemporary discourse, armed conflict is understood not merely as warfare between states, but as a broader phenomenon that includes civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, and protracted internal conflicts that deeply affect civilian populations. A country battling armed conflict is prone to be underdeveloped, this is due to the fact that the funds which ought to be solely budgeted for developmental projects will be channeled towards.

From the perspective International Committee on Red Cross (2024), armed conflict can mean a state of hostility in a particular country leading to waste of human and material

resources. An armed conflict in a country can arise due to the citizens fighting for internal change, which can be in form of secessionist movement spearheaded by an aggrieved ethnic, cultural or religious group. Also, armed conflict can take the form of people that are armed and prepared to take over power from the ruling government. In the opinion of Pospisil (2022), armed conflict exists where there is sustained armed violence between organized groups, whether between states or within a state, and where such violence disrupts governance, security, and social order. This definition reflects the modern reality that most armed conflicts today are internal rather than international.

From a legal perspective, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2024) conceptualizes armed conflict as a condition that triggers the application of international humanitarian law (IHL). The ICRC (2024) distinguishes between international armed conflicts (between two or more States) and non-international armed conflicts (between governmental forces and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State). This legal framing emphasizes that armed conflict is not defined by a formal declaration of war, but by facts on the ground, particularly the level of violence and organization of armed actors.

Kaldor (2023) describes modern armed conflict as “new wars” characterized by blurred lines between combatants and civilians, widespread violations of human rights, and the targeting of civilian infrastructure. This perspective underscores that armed conflict today often affects societies long after active fighting has ended, through displacement, trauma, poverty, and weakened institutions. At the international level, the United Nations (2023) views armed conflict as a major threat to international peace and security, with far-reaching consequences for development, human rights, and global stability. The UN emphasizes that armed conflict increasingly intersects with issues like climate change, resource scarcity and political exclusion, making it more complex and protracted. The use of military force between two or more states or non-state armed organizations is referred to here as armed conflict. If there are 25 or more deaths from battle-related violence in a particular year, or if there are more than 100 deaths from "explosions and remote violence," it is deemed an active armed conflict.

Harmonising the aforementioned conceptions reveal that armed conflict means a sustained situation of organised violence involving state and/or non-state actors, marked by significant humanitarian, social, and legal consequences. Armed conflict is not limited to

traditional battlefield warfare but encompasses modern forms of violence that disrupt societies, undermine human security, and require legal, political, and humanitarian responses. Armed conflict represents both a breakdown of peaceful social relations and a critical challenge to the protection of human rights and international order in the modern world.

Concept of Children's Rights

Children's rights refer to the body of moral, legal, and social entitlements that recognize children as autonomous human beings with inherent dignity, while acknowledging their need for special protection, care, and guidance due to their stage of development. In contemporary scholarship, children's rights are no longer viewed merely as extensions of parental authority or welfare concerns, but as a distinct and evolving human rights framework that places children at the center of social, legal, and political decision-making. Recent scholars emphasize that children's rights are grounded in the universality of human rights, but tailored to the specific realities of childhood. Lundy and Tobin (2022) conceptualize children's rights as guarantees that ensure children are recognized as rightsholders with voices, agency, and legitimate interests that must be respected in all matters affecting them. This view underscores the shift from perceiving children as passive recipients of care to active participants in their own lives.

From a developmental and participatory perspective, Archard (2012) argues that children's rights aim to balance protection with empowerment by recognizing children's evolving capacities. According to him, children's rights provide a framework through which children are supported to exercise increasing levels of autonomy while still receiving appropriate adult guidance and protection. This highlights the dynamic nature of children's rights, which adapt as children grow and mature.

At the international level, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023), particularly through General Comment No. 26, defines children's rights as an integrated set of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that must be realized in a manner that ensures children's survival, development, protection, and meaningful participation. The Committee stresses that children's rights are interdependent and must be implemented holistically, especially in the context of contemporary global challenges such as inequality, climate change, and digital environments.

Similarly, UNICEF (2022) conceptualizes children's rights as legal and moral obligations that require states, institutions, and societies to act in the best interests of the child

while ensuring non-discrimination and respect for children's views. This approach reinforces the idea that children's rights impose duties on adults and institutions, not as acts of charity, but as binding responsibilities.

Theoretical Framework

Structural Violence Theory

The structural violence theory by Johan Galtung provides a good analytical lens to understand violations of children's rights in societies affected by conflict such as Sudan. The theory explains how harm is done not just by direct physical violence but also through social, political and economic structures that systematically disadvantage certain groups, especially vulnerable populations like children.

Galtung's central argument is that violence should be understood broadly to include structural arrangements that prevent individuals from meeting their basic needs or realizing their full potential. According to Galtung (1969), structural violence exists when social institutions, state policies, or economic systems create unequal life chances, leading to avoidable suffering, deprivation, and premature death. In this sense, children's rights violations such as denial of education, exposure to hunger, recruitment into armed groups, forced displacement, and lack of healthcare, are not accidental outcomes of war, but predictable consequences of deeply entrenched structural inequalities.

In the Sudanese context, structural violence theory helps explain how prolonged armed conflict, weak governance, political instability, and economic collapse interact to produce widespread violations of children's rights. Even before the escalation of armed conflict, many children in Sudan faced poverty, limited access to education, and inadequate healthcare. Armed conflict intensifies these existing structural problems by destroying institutions, displacing families, and diverting state resources away from social services. As a result, children suffer not only from direct violence, such as killings or injuries, but also from indirect forms of violence embedded in social structures that fail to protect them.

The strength of structural violence theory lies in its holistic and explanatory power. It moves beyond narrow interpretations of violence that focus only on armed actors and battlefield events, allowing researchers to analyze how laws, policies, economic systems, and power relations contribute to sustained violations of children's rights. This makes the theory particularly useful for Sudan, where children's suffering is shaped by a combination of armed

conflict, institutional breakdown, displacement, and chronic underdevelopment. The theory also aligns well with international child rights frameworks, which emphasize state responsibility and structural conditions in the realisation of children's rights. However, the theory does not emphasise the role of individual actors, such as armed groups who directly perpetrate abuses against children. Structural violence theory remains suitable for analyzing violations of children's rights in Sudan because it provides a comprehensive lens that captures both the visible and invisible forms of violence affecting children, linking armed conflict to longstanding social and institutional failures.

An Overview of the Causes of Armed Conflict and Violation Children Rights in Sudan

The conflict in Sudan dates back to the pre-independence 1956 era when part of the Southern Sudan erupted in violence in 1955 against the central government due to the systemic political and economic marginalisation (BBC, 2023). Sudan is a heterogeneous nation including more than 500 distinct ethnic groupings, mostly categorised into Arab and African ethnicities (Musa, 2022). The Arabized populace, mostly concentrated in the northern areas, has traditionally wielded political and economic dominance, whilst African ethnic communities, principally situated in the southern and western regions, have experienced marginalisation. As argued by Zibeir (2024), racial struggle between the North, mainly Arabs and the South consisting the Dinka and Nuer, in spite of the fact that population serves as the root cause of the conflict.

The South has most of the oil wealth feels oppressed and marginalised by Khartoum triggering the violent conflict between 1972 and 2005 (Zibeir, 2024). In addition, Sudan is characterised by a religious division, with a mostly Muslim population in the north and a primarily Christian and animist population in the south. The existence of these distinctions has resulted in cultural conflicts, prejudice, and acts of aggression, intensifying deep-rooted animosities. As argued by Musa (2022), ethnic and tribal politics entrenched by political leaders in Sudan affected stability and democratic practices. The inability of the elites to create a united nation accommodating the diverse groups generated identity crisis leading to crisis.

Sudan's history is characterised by two long-lasting civil conflicts between the northern and southern regions, fuelled by ethnic, religious, and economic issues. The first civil war (1955-1972) began immediately after gaining independence from British colonial authority and concluded with the Addis Ababa Agreement, which conferred autonomy to the

southern area. Nevertheless, persistent discontent resulted in the occurrence of the second civil war (1983-2005), causing the loss of millions of lives and the displacement of millions of people. As at 2025, Egypt is hosting the largest number of Sudanese refugees (1.5 million), followed by Chad (773,662), South Sudan (349,935), Libya (256,000), Uganda (72,125) and Ethiopia (43,159) (UNHCR, 2025). In South Sudan, most of those arriving are returning nationals (744,412) who had been living in Sudan as refugees (UNHCR, 2025). The war was brought to an end by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, which subsequently led to the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

After the secession of the South Sudan, in 2011, armed conflict unexpectedly reignited in Sudan April 2023, plunging the country especially Darfur region into severe violence with tensions in South Sudan, Kordofan and the Blue Nile state (Musa, 2022; UNHCR, 2025). Nevertheless, lingering problems and long-standing hostilities persistently affect the stability of Sudan. Marginalisation of non-Arab ethnic groups has been a prevalent concern in Sudanese politics and society which is one of the factors promoting violent conflict. The central government, headquartered in Khartoum, has always shown preference for Arab elites, disregarding the progress and inclusion of marginalised minorities. The north has seen a disproportionate concentration of economic resources, infrastructure, and political influence, leading to an exacerbation of socioeconomic gaps across areas (Brosche, 2019).

The process of marginalisation has given rise to feelings of bitterness and has contributed to the emergence of separatist groups that want to achieve more self-governance or complete independence. Moreso, the governing elites in Sudan implemented projects that reinforced the pre-existing political and economic differences between the centre and periphery along the ethnic or cultural identity. As argued by Ylonen (2009), economic prosperity of the central riverine Sudan, the home of the Arab Muslim elite contrasts the systemic economic and political marginalisation of the peripheral regions and their population that have resisted the elite cultural assimilation mission. Due to marginalisation of groups, secessionist movements emerged in different parts of Sudan as a response to the perceived marginalisation and neglect by the central authority. The independence of South Sudan in 2011, which occurred after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), marked the fulfilment of long-held desires for self-determination among the primarily African and Christian populace.

Additional areas, including Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan, have also had separatist movements aiming for more self-governance and political participation. The government has often responded to these movements with forceful suppression, intensifying confrontations (Hamza, 2024). Sudan has been plagued by recurrent political turmoil, including military coups, autocratic regimes, and civil unrest (Ayferam, 2023). Long periods of autocratic governance during Gaafar Nimeiry and Omar al-Bashir hindered the development of democratic systems and oppressed opposition, resulting in widespread dissatisfaction (Bakheit, 2020). In the opinion of Tchier (2021), the absence of a robust political framework has eroded effective administration, impeded progress, and fostered recurring episodes of aggression and unpredictability.

The abundant natural resources of Sudan, such as oil, water, and fertile land, have sparked conflicts as many parties vie for control and access to the valuable assets (Osman, 2024). It is important to note that intercommunal violence, especially in locations like Darfur and South Kordofan, was driven by conflicts related to land ownership, grazing rights, and water consumption (UNEP, 2022; Waal, 2022). The government's inequitable allocation of resources and neglect in addressing resource management concerns have intensified tensions and prolonged conflict (Mohammed & Alli, 2025). Poor governance and pervasive corruption have afflicted Sudan's administrative systems, leading to a loss of public confidence and intensifying socioeconomic divisions. Pervasive corruption has led to the diversion of public resources intended for development, increasing poverty and inequality.

Corruption has been a key driver of the violent conflict that led to the protests in 2018-2019 that forced President Omar al-Bashir out of power and a contributing factor to the October 2021 military coup staged by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that halted the democratic transition process. But the regimes fell, but the power structures and the corruption networks in and around the military and security forces became more pronounced. These networks increased tensions between the SAF and the RSF to a breaking point in April 2023 when the two groups engaged in armed conflict. Inadequate institutions and absence of responsibility have enabled political elites to centralise authority and sustain networks of favouritism, exacerbating the alienation of excluded people and intensifying concerns.

Effects Of Armed Conflict in Sudan on the Rights of the Children

The armed conflict in Sudan has affected the rights of the children in diverse ways. In terms of displacement, children's rights are violated as occasioned by the internal displacement caused by persistent conflict in the war-torn areas in Sudan. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2022), Sudan has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. An estimated 5 million children were displaced by armed conflict in Sudan (OCHA, 2022). It is noteworthy that Sudan currently hosts the largest number of displaced children globally, as at 12 November September more than 3.3 million children were displaced within the country and across the border because of the current conflict (OCHA, 2023; UNICEF, 2023). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says that children under the age of 18 made up 50 per cent of those who crossed from Sudan into South Sudan, 57 per cent of those who crossed into Chad, 40 per cent of those who crossed into Egypt, 42 per cent of those who crossed into Ethiopia and 62 per cent of those who crossed into the Central African Republic between 16 April and 6 September 2023. As at 22 August 2023, there were at least 559 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) registered in Ethiopia and 313 in Egypt as at 25 October (UNHCR, 2023).

The displaced children are vulnerable to different vagaries of life. Displacement has negatively impacted the children as many of them crossed the border to the neighbouring country to act as refugees. The displacement has brought about recruitment of child soldiers among the internally displaced children, constituting gross violation of children's rights. The armed groups and government forces engaged in recruiting children as soldiers exposing them to extreme violence (UNICEF, 2024). The phenomenon of child soldiers in Sudan has encouraged the children to be used as combatants, carriers, cooks, spies and sex slaves leading to psychological and physical trauma (UNICEF). In 2023, conflict actors in Sudan close to 200 hundred children were recruited and used in hostilities (Schumtz, 2025)

Between 7,500 and 10,000 children remain associated with armed forces and groups (Ahmed, et al., 2025). The optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflicts raised the minimum age for participation in hostilities, compulsory and voluntary recruitment to 18 years. Sudan is also a party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which sets 18 as the minimum age of recruitment as a soldier. Also, the armed forces act clearly provides for the protection of children affected by armed conflict in the Sudan and sets the age of recruitment at 18 years in accordance with the Optional Protocol (Schmutz, 2025). Reports of the recruitment of children as young as 14

years old have risen on both sides of the warring factions. Conflict parties often view child soldiers as expendable and coerce them to participate in some of the most brutal aspects of their violence, as these young individuals tend to follow orders detrimental to their fundamental human rights. Consequently, this practice not only shatters their childhood but also perpetuates cycles of violence and instability (OCHA, 2023; Bociaga, 2023). The recruited children joined armed groups to meet their basic needs or seek protection from rivalry armed groups.

Sexual assault against minors is a common weapon used by warring sides to scare and threaten them in order to achieve military and political goals. The conflict in Sudan has led to a severe crisis of child rape and sexual violence, with children as young as one year old being targeted by armed men (UNICEF, 2025). Sexual violence is weaponised in Sudan's conflict, putting millions of children at risk. UNICEF reports 221 cases of child rape since early 2024, highlighting the widespread and devastating impact on young survivors (Ferguson, 2025). The violence has forced many women and children to flee their homes, seeking safety in displacement sites where resources are scarce and the risk of sexual violence remains high.

Many children that arrived in Chad's refugee camps from Sudan are suffering from acute malnutrition, illness or injuries. These refugees have limited access to basic services such as health care, clean water and sanitation, protection, nutrition and education. Their influx has further strained regions where local communities are already grappling with challenging living conditions (UNICEF, 2023). The most recent data available relates specifically to the situation of displaced children in Chad, but the same is probably true for most Sudanese children displaced across the border. Sudanese refugees impacted by Egypt's tightening of its border policies and the increasing number of people stranded on the border between Sudan and Egypt since 10 June 2023 (UNICEF, 2023). Over 15,000 are sheltering with host communities and relatives, and over 8,000 are in shelters in the city of Wadi Halfa (The New Arab, 2023). The country demands that all Sudanese citizens obtain visas from the Egyptian consular office in Wadi Halfa or Port Sudan before crossing the border. Previously, under-16 children, women, and the elderly were allowed to enter without a visa, but Egypt has reversed that visa exemption (Al-Jazeera, 2023). About 13,000 children under five were suffering from acute malnutrition in screening centers in Chad in September, predominantly in Ouaddai state, which was receiving more than 80% of refugees from Sudan (WHO, 2023).

Since the start of the conflict in Sudan, there had been a 56% rise in the admission of malnourished children to hospitals across Ouaddai. This substantial prevalence of malnutrition among incoming refugees underscores the extremely challenging circumstances faced by the displaced people from Darfur seeking sanctuary in Chad (WHO, 2023; UNHCR, 2023). In Ethiopia, as at 23 October 2023, out of 1,555 Sudanese refugee under-five children screened for malnutrition across transit and reception centres, less than 8% were identified as malnourished (UNHCR, 2023). As of 30 October 2023, 7% of 817 children under-five screened for malnutrition across transit and reception centres in South Sudan were found to be malnourished. For the fourth consecutive week, malnutrition rates have fallen below the emergency threshold of 10%. Actual numbers are likely higher, as it is possible that not all child refugees are screened (UNHCR, 2023).

Prior to the current conflict, Sudan had a 55 per cent mortality rate for under-five children, with 5 per cent dying as a result of recurrent disease outbreaks and malnutrition. Almost 70% of the country's hospitals being non-operational adds to children's vulnerability. Healthcare facilities are under extreme strain due to lack of staff, essential life-saving medicines and critical medical equipment. This situation is worsening the recurrent disease outbreaks and leading to the preventable loss of life (UNICEF, 2022). As at 15 October 2023, the only medical supplies entering the countries were coming from aid organisations, which were unable to keep up with demand (USAID, 2023). At the same time, conflict parties have been blocking the transportation of surgical and other medical supplies by humanitarian responders (USAID, 2023). About 7.4 million children lacked access to portable and clean drinking water and were at risk of waterborne diseases, while 3.4 million under-five children were at high risk of diarrhea diseases and cholera (OCHA, 2023). The conflict in Sudan severely affected the availability of safe water and sanitation services across the country (OCHA, 2023).

The poor state of healthcare services and disruptions have resulted in an increase in disease outbreaks, especially in overpopulated IDP camps and reception centres in neighbouring countries. As at 19 September 2023, acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, and malaria were the three most occurring diseases among Sudanese child refugees because of poor healthcare services and the consumption of unsafe water and food in Darfur. Between 15 May and 14 September, over 1,200 children died as a result of disease outbreaks in nine camps in White Nile state (UNHCR, 2023).

In Sudan, displaced children have been forced to use non-potable water sources, increasing the risk of diseases, such as cholera, measles, and polio. Waterborne diseases among children in IDP camps and reception centres at border points have increased (OCHA, 2023). In Blue Nile and Khartoum states, cases of waterborne diseases under control before the start of the conflict also increased affecting health of the children. The conflict has also disrupted sanitation services, particularly in IDP camps, where overpopulation has been prevalent (UNHCR, 2023). Open defecation was a problem, increasing the risk of water contamination and waterborne diseases. Inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities, coupled with rising food prices as a result of water scarcity, has created a challenging environment for vulnerable populations, including malnourished children (UNICEF, 2023; OCHA, 2023).

Measures Taken by the Sudanese Government to Protect Child's Rights in Sudan

In an attempt to protect the rights of the children in Sudan, the government put forward measures in place in form of implementation of laws and policy frameworks. For instance, the Sudan Child Act of 2010 serves as the main legislative framework for child protection in the nation. The document delineates the rights of children to receive education, healthcare, safeguarding against exploitation and liberation from detrimental practices such as child marriage and child labour. In addition, Sudan has ratified international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which establishes a structure for protecting the rights of children.

Furthermore, the Sudanese government formulated comprehensive strategies and plans at the national level to effectively tackle and resolve issues affecting the rights of children. The plans delineate precise objectives and strategies to boost the well-being of children, including actions to augment accessibility to school, healthcare, and social protection services. An instance of this is the National Plan of Action for Children in Sudan (2016-2020), which specifically emphasises child survival, protection, development, and participation. Its goals are centred on health, education, child protection, and social welfare.

The country also implemented child protection mechanisms at both the national and local levels in order to prevent and address instances of children's rights abuses. This includes the creation of child protection committees, social welfare departments, and dedicated sections within law enforcement agencies to tackle issues related to child abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Attempts have been undertaken to enhance the collaboration among

government departments, civil society organisations, and foreign partners with the aim of enhancing child protection services.

The government also placed a high importance on enhancing the availability of education and healthcare services for children. The Basic Education Development Programme and similar initiatives strive to enhance primary school enrollment rates and elevate the quality of education. In a similar vein, the government has instituted healthcare initiatives that specifically focus on maternity and child health, immunisation, and nutrition. The aim is to diminish child death rates and enhance overall health results.

Consequently, Sudan has implemented measures to tackle the issues of child labour and trafficking, both of which continue to pose substantial obstacles in the nation. The government has officially approved and implemented international agreements on child labour and trafficking, and has passed laws that explicitly prohibit child labour and trafficking of individuals. Law enforcement authorities cooperate with overseas counterparts to investigate instances of child labour and trafficking and bring those responsible to justice. In addition, awareness programmes and interventions implemented at the community level strive to prevent child labour and trafficking while providing assistance to children who have been impacted.

In the regions affected by war like Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, the Sudanese government cooperates with humanitarian groups to provide aid to children who have been afflicted by armed conflict and forced to leave their homes. Efforts include the provision of sustenance, lodging, medical treatment, schooling, and psychological and social assistance to children and their families who have been impacted. Efforts are made to prevent the enlistment of underage combatants and facilitate the reintegration of former child soldiers back into their respective communities.

Conclusion

The examination of armed conflict and violations of children's rights in Sudan underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions and global solidarity to address the multifaceted challenges faced by children in conflict zones. Through an in-depth analysis of the socio-political dynamics, historical context, and humanitarian implications, this research has illuminated the pervasive and devastating impact of armed conflict on the most vulnerable members of society.

The findings reveal a disturbing pattern of systematic violations of children's rights, including but not limited to recruitment as child soldiers, sexual violence, forced displacement, denial of access to education and healthcare, and severe psychological trauma. These violations not only violate international human rights law and humanitarian principles but also perpetuate cycles of poverty, instability, and intergenerational trauma. Furthermore, the research highlights the inadequacy of current legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms, and humanitarian responses in effectively protecting and promoting the rights of children in conflict settings. Despite the existence of international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, implementation gaps, lack of accountability, and limited resources continue to hinder progress in safeguarding children's rights.

Moving forward, it is imperative for stakeholders at the local, national, and international levels to prioritise the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict in Sudan. This requires a holistic approach that addresses root causes, strengthens legal and institutional frameworks, enhances access to essential services, promotes community resilience, and ensures meaningful participation of children in decision-making processes. Ultimately, the protection of children's rights in Sudan and other conflict-affected regions demands sustained political will, solidarity, and collective action. By upholding the principles of human dignity, justice, and compassion, we can strive towards a future where every child can grow up in a safe, nurturing environment, free from the horrors of war and violence.

Recommendations

In an attempt to guide against arm conflict and child's rights violation in Sudan, the paper recommend the following:

- i. Issues of identity politics causing Sudan conflict should be resolved by the power brokers to allow national integration.
- ii. The peace process should be strengthened and ceasefire agreements be implemented to create a peaceful environment in Sudan for children's protection

- iii. Provision of quality education to every child is a critical strategy for preventing child recruitment. Schools should remain safe havens where children are fully protected from recruitment.
- iv. Governments must enact and implement strong legislation that makes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups a criminal offence.
- v. The military and security forces should be adequately trained on child rights and protection. These efforts would build upon the 2013 agreement between the African Union Commission and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, which focuses on mainstreaming child protection in peacekeeping operations.
- vi. The Sudanese children need to be exposed to trauma management therapy to heal emotional wounds caused by the violent conflict.
- vii. Monitor and Report Child Recruitment and Use: In 2005, the United Nations Security Council established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in armed conflict through Resolution 1612.

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