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*Dignity, Justice, and Peace*

**WHY INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE MATTERS:  
REPRESENTING ETHNIC, GENDER AND REGIONAL  
DIVERSITY IN SUDAN'S LEADERSHIP**

**A Model for a United Africa**

**PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sudan stands at a critical juncture in its political evolution. After decades of authoritarian rule, civil conflict, and the secession of South Sudan in 2011, the country has an unprecedented opportunity to establish a governance system that reflects its rich diversity and serves all its citizens equitably. This proposal argues that inclusive governance—representing ethnic, gender, and regional diversity—is not merely an ethical imperative but a practical necessity for Sudan's stability, development, and unity.

Sudan is home to over 500 ethnic groups, speaking more than 100 languages, distributed across vastly different geographic and economic regions. Women constitute approximately 50% of the population yet remain severely underrepresented in political decision-making. The Khartoum-centric power structure has historically marginalized peripheral regions, fueling grievances that have erupted into devastating conflicts.

The benefits of inclusive governance are well-documented globally. Countries that embrace diversity in leadership experience greater political legitimacy, reduced conflict,

improved service delivery, and enhanced economic performance. Conversely, exclusionary governance has been a primary driver of Sudan's instability, contributing to the Darfur conflict, the South Sudan secession, and ongoing tensions in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and eastern regions.

This proposal presents a comprehensive framework for achieving inclusive governance in Sudan through:

Constitutional and legal reforms that enshrine diversity principles and protect minority rights

Electoral system redesign incorporating proportional representation and affirmative action measures

Gender quota requirements ensuring women hold at least 40% of legislative and executive positions

Federal restructuring providing meaningful regional autonomy and equitable resource distribution

Power-sharing mechanisms that prevent ethnic domination and encourage coalition governance

Capacity building programs to prepare marginalized communities for leadership roles

The implementation strategy outlines a phased approach over ten years, beginning with immediate transitional justice measures and constitutional dialogue, progressing through institutional reforms and capacity development, and culminating in fully inclusive democratic elections and sustained participatory governance.

Sudan's success in this endeavor would establish a powerful precedent for the African continent. Many African nations grapple with similar diversity challenges, and Sudan could demonstrate that ethnic, gender, and regional pluralism can be sources of strength rather than division. The proposal identifies transferable principles applicable across Africa, including:

Recognition of diversity as a national asset requiring institutional accommodation

Rejection of winner-takes-all systems in favor of inclusive power-sharing

Mandatory gender representation benchmarks

Decentralization as a mechanism for bringing government closer to citizens

Constitutionalism and rule of law as protections against majority tyranny

The challenges are substantial. Political elites may resist sharing power, traditional patriarchal structures may oppose gender equality, and resource constraints may limit

implementation capacity. However, these obstacles are not insurmountable. International support, sustained civil society pressure, and the tangible benefits of inclusive governance can overcome resistance.

The cost of maintaining the status quo far exceeds the investment required for reform. Sudan has lost billions of dollars to conflict, seen millions displaced, and sacrificed generations to instability. Inclusive governance offers a pathway to break this cycle, unlocking Sudan's considerable human and natural resources for shared prosperity.

This proposal calls on the Sudanese government, civil society, international partners, and all stakeholders to commit to building a governance system that truly represents Sudan's diversity. The time for incremental half-measures has passed. Sudan needs bold, comprehensive reforms that give every ethnic group, every woman, and every region a genuine stake in the nation's future.

By succeeding in this transformation, Sudan can become a beacon of hope for Africa—proof that deeply divided societies can forge inclusive political communities, that diversity can be governed democratically, and that the continent's greatest challenges can be overcome through visionary leadership and inclusive institutions.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and Context**

Sudan has endured cycles of conflict, authoritarian rule, and political instability since independence in 1956. The underlying cause of this turmoil has been the persistent exclusion of large segments of Sudanese society from meaningful political participation and access to state resources. Ethnic minorities, women, and peripheral regions have been systematically marginalized by power structures concentrated in Khartoum and dominated by narrow elite coalitions.

The secession of South Sudan in 2011, following decades of civil war, was the most dramatic manifestation of this exclusionary governance. However, South Sudan's independence did not resolve Sudan's diversity challenges. The remaining Sudanese territory still contains extraordinary ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional variety that must be accommodated within governance structures.

Recent political developments, including the 2019 revolution that toppled Omar al-Bashir's regime and subsequent attempts at democratic transition, have created opportunities for fundamental reform. However, progress has been uneven and

contested, with military-civilian tensions culminating in the October 2021 coup and subsequent violence that erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

This crisis has made the need for inclusive governance more urgent than ever. A sustainable political settlement in Sudan must address the root causes of conflict by ensuring all groups have representation, voice, and stakes in the system.

## **1.2 Purpose and Objectives**

This proposal aims to:

Demonstrate why inclusive governance is essential for Sudan's stability, development, and national unity

Provide a comprehensive framework for achieving ethnic, gender, and regional representation in Sudanese leadership

Outline practical implementation strategies with timelines, resource requirements, and risk mitigation measures

Position Sudan's inclusive governance transition as a model for addressing similar challenges across Africa

Build consensus among Sudanese stakeholders and international partners for fundamental governance reforms

The ultimate objective is to support the establishment of a political system in Sudan where:

All major ethnic groups see themselves reflected in national institutions and have access to political power

Women participate equally in decision-making at all levels of government

Regional diversity is accommodated through decentralized structures that empower local communities

Governance is based on rule of law, human rights, and democratic principles rather than domination by any single group

National identity coexists with and celebrates ethnic, regional, and cultural particularities

## **1.3 Scope of the Proposal**

This proposal addresses governance at multiple levels:

National executive and legislative institutions

Regional and state governance structures

Local government and community representation

Political party systems and electoral mechanisms

Civil service and public administration

Security sector governance

The analysis covers three dimensions of diversity:

**Ethnic diversity:** Representation of Arab, Nubian, Beja, Fur, Zaghawa, Nuba, and other ethnic communities

**Gender diversity:** Women's participation and leadership across all institutions

**Regional diversity:** Equitable representation of Khartoum, Darfur, Eastern Sudan, Kordofan, Northern Sudan, and other regions

The proposal draws on comparative experiences from other African countries and international best practices while recognizing Sudan's unique historical, cultural, and political context.

## **2. SUDAN'S DIVERSITY LANDSCAPE**

### **2.1 Ethnic Composition and Distribution**

Sudan's ethnic landscape is exceptionally complex, with estimates ranging from 500 to 597 distinct ethnic groups. This diversity results from Sudan's location at the crossroads of Arab North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, creating a unique blend of cultures, languages, and traditions.

Major ethnic categories include:

**Sudanese Arabs:** The largest category, though itself ethnically diverse, including groups like Ja'alin, Shaigiya, and Baggara Arabs. Predominantly located in central Sudan along the Nile and in parts of Darfur and Kordofan.

Nubians: Indigenous to northern Sudan along the Nile, with distinct languages and cultural heritage predating Arab migration.

Beja: Inhabiting eastern Sudan, with a distinct Cushitic language and historically pastoral lifestyle.

Fur: The largest ethnic group in Darfur, predominantly farmers with their own sultanate history.

Zaghawa: Present in northern Darfur, straddling the Sudan-Chad border, historically pastoralists.

Masalit: Western Darfur residents with agricultural traditions.

Nuba: Diverse groups in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan, with over 50 distinct languages.

This categorization, however, oversimplifies reality. Many Sudanese have mixed heritage, ethnic identities have been politicized and sometimes artificially constructed, and there is significant variation within categories. Language provides another lens: Sudan has over 100 indigenous languages from Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, and Niger-Congo families, plus Arabic as the lingua franca.

Religious identity intersects with ethnicity. While approximately 97% of Sudan's current population is Muslim following South Sudan's secession, there are Christian and indigenous religious minorities, particularly in the Nuba Mountains and among some Nilotic groups. Importantly, being Muslim does not negate ethnic particularism—Muslim Fur or Zaghawa maintain distinct identities from Arab Muslims.

Geographic distribution matters politically. Arab groups predominate in the Nile valley and central regions where political and economic power has historically concentrated. Peripheral areas—Darfur, Eastern Sudan, South Kordofan, Blue Nile—have higher concentrations of non-Arab groups and have experienced systematic marginalization.

## **2.2 Gender Demographics and Current Representation**

Women constitute approximately 49.5% of Sudan's population of around 45 million people. Despite this demographic reality, women remain severely underrepresented in political leadership and decision-making.

Under the Bashir regime, Sudan briefly had a 25% quota for women in the national parliament, achieving 30% representation at its peak. However, these gains were superficial—women parliamentarians had limited real power and primarily served the authoritarian system rather than advancing women's rights or interests.

Following the 2019 revolution, women played extraordinary roles as protest leaders, organizers, and symbols of the democratic movement. Images of Sudanese women leading chants and demonstrations became iconic. However, this activism did not automatically translate into formal political power.

The transitional government formed after Bashir's fall included some women in prominent positions, including the first female Chief Justice and female ministers. However, overall representation remained limited, and the subsequent military takeover further marginalized women's political participation.

Current barriers to women's political engagement include:

Cultural norms emphasizing women's domestic roles and questioning their suitability for public leadership

Legal frameworks that maintain discriminatory provisions regarding citizenship, testimony, and family law

Economic constraints limiting women's resources for political campaigning

Security concerns, including harassment and violence against women activists

Lack of childcare and family support systems enabling political participation

Educational disparities, though narrowing, particularly in rural areas

Male domination of political party structures and candidate selection

Despite these obstacles, Sudan has a vibrant women's movement with organizations advocating for rights, representation, and reform. Women's networks played crucial roles in resistance committees during the revolution and continue pushing for inclusive governance.

The gender dimension of inclusive governance is not merely about numbers but about transforming power relations, policy priorities, and governance culture to reflect women's experiences, needs, and perspectives.

### **2.3 Regional Characteristics and Disparities**

Sudan's regions exhibit dramatic differences in geography, economy, infrastructure, and human development, creating significant inequalities that governance structures must address.

**Khartoum Region:** The capital region has concentrated political power, economic activity, educational institutions, and infrastructure. Khartoum state has the highest GDP per capita, best health facilities, and most developed services. This concentration has

made it the magnet for internal migration, creating sprawling informal settlements alongside wealthy areas.

Northern Region: Sparsely populated with Nubian heritage, relatively more developed due to proximity to Egypt and Nile agriculture, but with limited economic diversity beyond agriculture and small-scale trade.

Eastern Region (Kassala, Gedaref, Red Sea states): Resource-rich through agriculture (Gedaref is Sudan's breadbasket) and Port Sudan's strategic location, but historically marginalized politically. Home to Beja communities with distinct grievances. The Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (2006) attempted to address regional marginalization but implementation has been limited.

Kordofan (North and South Kordofan): Diverse region with significant oil resources (particularly in the borderlands with South Sudan), agriculture, and pastoralism. South Kordofan's Nuba Mountains have experienced conflict and marginalization. The area has complex ethnic composition including Baggara Arabs, Nuba groups, and others.

Darfur (five states: North, South, West, Central, and East Darfur): Perhaps Sudan's most internationally known region due to the 2003-present conflict. Rich in agricultural potential and some mineral resources but severely underdeveloped. Darfur has experienced systematic marginalization in infrastructure, education, and political representation, fueling grievances that erupted into conflict described by some as genocide. The region has complex ethnic dynamics among Fur, Zaghawa, Masalit, Arab groups, and others.

Blue Nile State: Resource-rich border region that experienced conflict after South Sudan's independence. Ethnically diverse with significant non-Arab populations. Has felt economically marginalized despite resource wealth.

These regional disparities are not accidental but result from deliberate policy choices favoring Khartoum and the Nile valley. Infrastructure investment, educational facilities, health services, and economic opportunities have concentrated in the center while peripheries remained underdeveloped.

Resource extraction has often occurred in peripheral regions with benefits flowing to the center—a pattern that characterized oil development in the South (before secession) and continues in other regions. This extractive relationship without reciprocal development investment has fueled resentment.

## **2.4 Historical Context of Exclusion**

Understanding Sudan's current diversity challenges requires historical perspective. Exclusionary governance has deep roots in colonial and post-independence patterns.

British colonial rule (1898-1956) employed divide-and-rule strategies, creating separate administration for the South and treating it as distinct from the North, while within the North favoring certain groups and regions for administrative roles. This created patterns of differential development and ethnic favoritism that persisted after independence.

Post-independence governments, despite different ideological orientations, maintained centralized power structures dominated by Arab, Muslim, northern elites—often specifically from riverain groups. Southern Sudanese, Darfuris, Nuba, Beja, and others found themselves marginalized.

Military regimes (including Abboud, Nimeiri, and Bashir) generally reinforced centralization and ethnic/regional exclusion, though sometimes using rhetoric of unity or Islamization to obscure this reality. The Bashir regime's Islamist project claimed universal religious identity but in practice maintained ethnic Arab domination while using Islamization to suppress non-Arab cultures.

Civil wars with the South (1955-1972, 1983-2005) and the Darfur conflict (2003-present) both reflected grievances rooted in political exclusion, economic marginalization, and cultural domination. In both cases, peripheral regions rebelled against centralized governments that denied them representation, resources, and respect.

Women's exclusion has similarly deep historical roots in patriarchal social structures reinforced by particular interpretations of Islamic law and customary practices. While Sudanese women's movements have existed since the independence era and achieved some gains, systematic political participation has been blocked.

Peace agreements like the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005) with the South and Darfur Peace Agreement (2006) attempted to address inclusion through power-sharing and representation formulas. However, implementation was often halfhearted, and the fundamental governance model remained contested.

The lesson from this history is clear: Sudan's conflicts are not primordial ethnic hatreds but political struggles over power, resources, and recognition. Governance structures that exclude large populations create grievances that eventually erupt into violence. Sustainable peace requires transforming these exclusionary patterns into genuinely inclusive institutions.

### **3. THE CASE FOR INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE**

#### **3.1 Political Stability and Legitimacy**

Political science research and practical experience demonstrate that inclusive governance is foundational to political stability, particularly in diverse societies. Governments that represent their populations broadly enjoy greater legitimacy and are less vulnerable to violent challenges.

Legitimacy stems from citizens' perception that the political system is fair and represents their interests. When large groups feel permanently excluded from power—unable to influence decisions or access resources regardless of their political efforts—they lose faith in the system. This delegitimization can lead to disengagement at best and armed rebellion at worst.

Sudan's history illustrates this dynamic. The Darfur conflict arose when populations in western Sudan, long marginalized politically and economically, saw no peaceful pathway to representation or development. Rebellions in South Kordofan and Blue Nile similarly reflected groups' despair at changing their circumstances through normal political processes.

Conversely, inclusive institutions create stakeholders in the system's survival. When ethnic minorities, women, and peripheral regions have genuine representation, they have incentives to work within political frameworks rather than against them. This doesn't eliminate all conflict—democratic politics involves ongoing contestation—but it channels disputes into manageable political processes rather than existential confrontations.

Power-sharing arrangements, common in post-conflict societies, recognize this reality. By guaranteeing representation to previously excluded groups, they create confidence that the political arena won't simply reproduce old patterns of domination. Lebanon's confessional system, Northern Ireland's convocational arrangements, and South Africa's Government of National Unity after apartheid all reflected this logic, despite their varying degrees of success.

For Sudan, inclusive governance means that a Fur farmer in Darfur, a Beja herder in eastern Sudan, and a Nubian merchant in the North can all see their communities represented in national institutions. It means women from all backgrounds participate in decisions affecting their lives. This broad representation builds the legitimacy necessary for difficult reforms and national unity.

### **3.2 Economic Development and Resource Distribution**

Inclusive governance produces superior economic outcomes compared to exclusionary systems. This occurs through multiple mechanisms:

**Broader human capital utilization:** Exclusionary systems waste talent by limiting opportunities based on ethnicity, gender, or region rather than merit. When only men

from certain ethnic groups or regions can access leadership positions, vast human resources go untapped. Inclusive systems harness talent from the entire population.

**Better policy quality:** Diverse decision-making bodies bring varied perspectives, improving policy design. Women leaders often prioritize different issues—education, healthcare, social services—than all-male bodies. Regional representatives understand local conditions better than Khartoum technocrats. Ethnic diversity brings cultural knowledge crucial for effective implementation.

**Equitable resource distribution:** Exclusionary governance typically directs resources to favored groups and regions. Sudan's concentration of infrastructure investment in Khartoum while peripheral regions languish exemplifies this. Inclusive governance creates pressure for fairer distribution, ensuring development reaches all citizens.

**Reduced conflict costs:** Political violence devastates economies through direct destruction, displaced populations, disrupted production, and deterred investment. Sudan has lost billions in conflict costs. Inclusive governance reduces these risks, enabling resources to flow toward development rather than security.

**Enhanced investment climate:** Investors seek stable, predictable environments. Inclusive institutions that manage diversity peacefully signal lower risks than exclusionary systems vulnerable to upheaval. Sudan's potential in agriculture, minerals, and strategic location requires stability that inclusive governance provides.

Research on African development demonstrates these patterns. Countries like Botswana and Rwanda that built broadly inclusive institutions (despite different approaches) achieved superior development outcomes compared to those with narrow ethnic ruling coalitions. Conversely, exclusionary governance in places like Zaire/DRC or CAR correlated with economic decline.

For Sudan specifically, inclusive governance could unlock economic potential through:

Rational agricultural development in Darfur and Gedaref rather than allowing productive regions to burn in conflict

Port Sudan development benefiting eastern Sudan rather than profits flowing entirely to Khartoum

Equitable revenue sharing from natural resources with producing regions

Women's economic participation increasing GDP—research consistently shows that gender equality boosts economic growth

Infrastructure investment reaching marginalized areas, creating markets and opportunities

### 3.3 Social Cohesion and National Unity

Paradoxically, recognizing and accommodating diversity strengthens national unity more effectively than forced uniformity. Exclusionary governance often employs nationalist rhetoric claiming everyone is equally "Sudanese" while actually privileging certain groups. This breeds cynicism and resentment.

Inclusive governance acknowledges that Sudanese national identity coexists with ethnic, regional, and gender identities. A Zaghawa woman can be simultaneously Zaghawa, a woman, a Darfuri, and Sudanese. These identities are not contradictory but complementary layers of belonging.

Social cohesion emerges when all groups feel respected and valued within the nation. This requires:

Recognition: Acknowledging different groups' distinct identities, histories, and contributions rather than forcing assimilation to a dominant culture

Representation: Ensuring all groups see themselves in national institutions and symbols

Redistribution: Sharing national resources and opportunities equitably across groups

Rights: Protecting minorities and vulnerable groups through constitutional and legal frameworks

Sudan has struggled with national identity since independence, oscillating between Arab-Islamic definitions that alienate non-Arabs and vague Sudanese nationalism lacking content. The South's secession partly reflected failure to forge inclusive national identity.

Going forward, Sudanese national identity must embrace the country's diversity as a defining characteristic and source of pride. This means:

Celebrating Sudan's position bridging Arab and African worlds

Recognizing Arabic as the lingua franca while respecting indigenous languages

Acknowledging Islam's importance while protecting religious minorities

Highlighting how different regions and ethnic groups contributed to Sudanese history

Creating national symbols, narratives, and commemorations that reflect diverse experiences

Inclusive governance institutionalizes this pluralistic national vision. When Darfuris, Nubians, Arabs, Beja, and Nuba all hold significant positions, when women and men share power, when regions have genuine autonomy, "Sudanese" becomes a meaningful common identity encompassing diversity rather than suppressing it.

Countries like Tanzania succeeded in building national unity across tremendous diversity through deliberate inclusion policies, language policy (Swahili), and shared institutions. South Africa's "Rainbow Nation" concept, despite challenges, attempted similar inclusive national building after apartheid. Sudan can learn from these examples.

### 3.4 International Standards and Best Practices

Sudan's commitment to inclusive governance aligns with international human rights standards and good governance principles that Sudan has endorsed through various treaties and frameworks.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms equality and non-discrimination. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees political participation rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Sudan signed with reservations, requires measures to ensure women's political participation.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) establish African standards for inclusion and women's rights. The African Union's Constitutive Act commits member states to democratic principles and good governance.

International development frameworks emphasize inclusive governance. The Sustainable Development Goals include targets for responsive, inclusive, participatory decision-making (SDG 16.7) and women's equal participation (SDG 5.5). The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which guided international engagement with Sudan, prioritizes inclusive political settlements.

Best practices from comparative experience suggest effective approaches for Sudan:

Constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination and minority rights

Electoral system design using proportional representation or reserved seats to ensure minority inclusion

Gender quotas ensuring minimum women's representation—Rwanda's 60%+ women in parliament demonstrates possibilities

Federal or decentralized structures providing regional autonomy—Ethiopia's ethnic federalism (despite current challenges) and Nigeria's federal system offer models

Independent institutions like electoral commissions and human rights bodies protecting vulnerable groups

Transitional justice mechanisms addressing historical exclusion and conflict

Security sector reform ensuring armed forces reflect national diversity

These standards and practices provide templates Sudan can adapt to its specific context. International support for inclusive governance also creates opportunities for technical assistance, financing, and diplomatic backing.

## 4. CURRENT STATE OF GOVERNANCE IN SUDAN

### 4.1 Existing Power Structures

As of early 2026, Sudan's governance remains contested and fragile following the April 2023 outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti).

The conflict has created a governance vacuum with competing authorities:

The SAF-aligned government claims legitimacy as Sudan's recognized government, controlling some government institutions and international recognition

The RSF controls significant territory and challenges SAF authority

Civilian political forces, including the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) coalition that led the 2019 revolution, remain sidelined despite international pressure for civilian-military dialogue

This situation represents the culmination of Sudan's troubled post-Bashir transition. The 2019 revolution created hopes for democratic transformation, leading to a transitional power-sharing arrangement between military and civilian leaders. However, this arrangement was fragile from inception, with military leaders retaining dominant power.

The October 2021 military coup effectively ended meaningful civilian participation, and subsequent attempts at mediation failed to restore democratic transition before the SAF-RSF war erupted.

Power structures before and during this crisis have exhibited familiar patterns:

Military dominance: Armed forces, whether SAF or RSF, have controlled ultimate authority, reducing civilians to consultative roles at best

Khartoum centralization: Despite discourse about regions, decision-making has remained concentrated in the capital

Elite-dominated: Political and military elites from traditional ruling groups have controlled processes, with limited grassroots participation

Male-dominated: Women's revolutionary activism has not translated into proportional political power

Ethnic representation gaps: Non-Arab groups remain underrepresented relative to their populations, particularly in security forces and executive positions

## 4.2 Representation Gaps Analysis

Systematic analysis reveals significant representation gaps across ethnic, gender, and regional dimensions:

Ethnic Representation:

Arab groups, particularly riverain Arabs from the Nile valley, have historically dominated senior government positions, military leadership, and the civil service. While comprehensive recent data is limited due to conflict, historical patterns show:

Non-Arab groups like Fur, Zaghawa, Masalit, Beja, and Nuba have been significantly underrepresented in cabinet positions, senior military ranks, and diplomatic posts relative to their population percentages

Even when included, minority representatives often lack real decision-making authority

Security forces have particularly stark imbalances, with certain ethnic groups dominating officer corps

The RSF itself emerged partly from Janjaweed militias with particular ethnic composition, illustrating how exclusionary security sectors fuel conflict

Gender Representation:

Women's representation remains critically low:

The transitional government had some women ministers, but typically in "soft" portfolios like social affairs rather than power ministries like defense, interior, or finance

Women's participation in formal peace negotiations has been minimal despite UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calling for women's inclusion

The current military-dominated context has further marginalized women's voices

Local governance structures in many areas exclude women entirely

Regional Representation:

Khartoum region's dominance continues:

National government positions disproportionately go to Khartoum residents or people with Khartoum connections

Darfur, despite comprising a significant percentage of population and territory, has limited representation in national decision-making

Eastern Sudan, Kordofan regions, and other peripheral areas similarly lack proportional voice

Regional representation that exists often consists of elites co-opted into Khartoum circles rather than genuine regional advocates

#### **4.3 Barriers to Inclusive Participation**

Multiple barriers maintain exclusionary governance:

Structural/Institutional Barriers:

Centralized political system concentrating power in Khartoum with limited regional autonomy

Electoral systems (when elections occur) that don't ensure minority representation

Winner-takes-all presidential system creating zero-sum competition

Lack of quotas or affirmative action mechanisms

Military's structural position outside civilian control

Political party structures dominated by traditional elites

Economic Barriers:

Politics requires resources for campaigning, networking, and maintaining visibility that marginalized groups often lack

Economic marginalization of peripheral regions reduces their populations' capacity for political participation

Women's economic disadvantages limit political engagement

Control of economic resources by connected elites creates gatekeeping

#### Social/Cultural Barriers:

Patriarchal norms questioning women's suitability for leadership

Ethnic stereotypes and prejudices affecting perceptions of who can lead

Traditional authority structures sometimes conflicting with inclusive democratic principles

Educational disparities leaving some groups less prepared for political competition

#### Security Barriers:

Ongoing conflict creating displacement and disrupting political participation

Intimidation and violence against activists, particularly women and minority voices

Militarization of politics privileging those with armed force

Insecurity in peripheral regions preventing normal political organizing

#### Legal Barriers:

Discriminatory legal provisions affecting women's rights

Lack of constitutional protections for minority representation

Laws restricting civil society and political organization

Absence of frameworks for regional autonomy or federalism

### **4.4 Ongoing Transition Challenges**

Sudan's current transition faces severe challenges that affect prospects for inclusive governance:

**Active Armed Conflict:** The SAF-RSF war has killed thousands, displaced millions, and created humanitarian catastrophe. This violence makes normal political processes impossible in affected areas and creates trauma that will take generations to heal.

**Civilian-Military Relations:** Even if the current fighting ends, the fundamental question of military versus civilian authority remains unresolved. Achieving inclusive civilian governance requires subordinating military to democratic authority—a challenge given military leaders' power and interests.

**Justice and Accountability:** Sudan faces the difficult task of addressing decades of human rights abuses, including the Darfur genocide, Bashir-era crimes, and recent

conflict atrocities. Balancing justice with political stability while satisfying victims' demands for accountability creates tensions.

**Economic Crisis:** Sudan faces severe economic challenges including inflation, currency devaluation, loss of oil revenue after South Sudan's independence, debt burdens, and conflict-related destruction. Economic desperation can derail political reforms.

**Regional Dynamics:** Sudan's neighbors have interests in its trajectory. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, and others seek to influence outcomes, sometimes supporting particular factions rather than inclusive processes. Regional interference can undermine Sudanese-led solutions.

**International Engagement:** While international support is necessary, external actors sometimes prioritize stability over genuine inclusion, potentially supporting quick-fix solutions that don't address root causes.

Despite these challenges, the imperative for inclusive governance remains. Indeed, these very challenges demonstrate why exclusionary governance failed and why Sudan needs fundamental transformation.

## **5. FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE**

### **5.1 Constitutional and Legal Reforms**

A new constitutional framework must enshrine inclusive governance principles and provide mechanisms to ensure representation of diversity. Key elements include:

**Bill of Rights:** Comprehensive rights guarantees including equality and non-discrimination provisions explicitly mentioning ethnicity, gender, and region. Protection for minority languages, cultures, and religious practices. Women's rights to equality in all spheres including political participation, economic opportunity, and family law.

**Inclusion Principles:** Constitutional commitment to inclusive governance as a foundational principle. Requirements that government institutions at all levels reflect Sudan's diversity. Directive principles instructing the state to promote equitable development across regions.

**Representation Mechanisms:** Constitutional provisions for proportional representation or other systems ensuring minorities aren't marginalized. Gender quotas constitutionally mandated for legislature and executive. Regional representation through federal upper house or similar body.

Minority Protections: Constitutional safeguards preventing majority tyranny, such as requiring supermajorities for certain decisions affecting minorities. Provisions allowing minorities to block discriminatory legislation. Cultural and linguistic rights protected constitutionally.

Independent Institutions: Constitutional establishment of independent electoral commission, human rights commission, anti-corruption body, and other watchdog institutions with mandates to promote inclusion.

Justiciability: Ensuring constitutional provisions are enforceable through courts, with active judicial review protecting minority rights.

Amendment Procedures: Protecting inclusion provisions through stringent amendment requirements preventing future backsliding.

Legal reforms extending beyond the constitution include:

Electoral laws incorporating quotas and proportional representation

Political party laws requiring internal democracy and inclusive candidate selection

Anti-discrimination legislation covering employment, services, and public life

Laws protecting women's rights and gender equality

Language policy recognizing multiple languages in education and government

Land rights addressing historical dispossession and ensuring equitable access

Local government laws providing meaningful devolution

## 5.2 Electoral System Design

Electoral system architecture profoundly affects whether diverse groups achieve representation. Sudan should adopt systems promoting inclusion:

Mixed Electoral System: Combining proportional representation (PR) with some constituency seats balances local representation with national diversity. PR allocates seats based on vote percentages, ensuring minorities exceeding thresholds gain representation even without geographic concentration.

Reserved Seats: Constitutional reservation of legislative seats for:

- Women (minimum 40% of all seats)
- Ethnic minorities based on population percentages
- Regional representation ensuring peripheral areas aren't marginalized

Zipper Lists: Requiring party lists to alternate between men and women ensures gender balance. Can extend to ethnic and regional alternation.

Threshold Design: Low thresholds (2-5%) for PR component allow smaller parties representing minorities to gain seats without enabling excessive fragmentation.

Geographic Constituencies: Where used, constituency boundaries should not dilute minority voting power through gerrymandering. Independent boundary commissions should ensure fair delimitation.

Presidential Election System: Moving from winner-takes-all presidential elections to:

- Parliamentary system where executive emerges from legislative coalitions
- Or presidential system with runoff requirements and power-sharing provisions
- Or collective presidency representing different regions/groups

Affirmative Action: Beyond quotas, measures supporting disadvantaged groups' electoral participation:

- Public funding for candidates from underrepresented groups
- Voter education and registration in marginalized communities
- Capacity building for women and minority candidates

Electoral Administration: Independent electoral commission with:

- Composition reflecting diversity
- Transparent procedures
- International observation and support during transition

These reforms should be phased, potentially beginning with transitional arrangements and evolving toward fully inclusive democratic elections.

### **5.3 Affirmative Action Mechanisms**

Temporary special measures accelerating inclusion include:

Political Quotas: Beyond electoral quotas, requirements that:

- Cabinet includes minimum percentages of women (40%+), ethnic minorities, and regional representatives
- Civil service recruitment prioritizes underrepresented groups until balance achieved

- Diplomatic corps reflects diversity
- Judiciary includes diverse backgrounds

Educational Affirmative Action: Preferential university admission and scholarship programs for:

- Women in fields where underrepresented
- Students from marginalized regions and ethnic groups
- Targeted leadership development programs

Economic Empowerment: Affirmative procurement policies favoring businesses owned by women and minorities. Access to credit programs targeting disadvantaged groups. Land redistribution addressing historical dispossession.

Capacity Building: Programs preparing marginalized groups for leadership:

- Leadership training for women
- Civil service preparation for peripheral regions' residents
- Political skills development for minority candidates

Mentorship Programs: Connecting emerging leaders from underrepresented groups with experienced figures.

Security Sector: Recruitment quotas ensuring armed forces, police, and security services reflect ethnic and regional diversity.

Media Access: Ensuring marginalized groups have platforms to communicate and organize.

Sunset Provisions: Affirmative action should include review mechanisms, continuing until representation gaps close but avoiding permanent separate systems that entrench divisions.

#### **5.4 Decentralization and Federalism**

Devolving power addresses regional marginalization and allows diversity to flourish:

Federal Structure: Transforming Sudan's unitary system into genuine federation with:

States/Regions with significant autonomy over education, health, local infrastructure, cultural policy, and natural resource management

Constitutional division of powers between federal and state levels, preventing central government from overriding regions arbitrarily

Federal upper house (Senate/Council of States) representing regions equally or with enhanced representation for smaller populations

Fiscal Federalism: Equitable resource sharing through:

- Revenue sharing formulas allocating percentages of taxes and resource revenues to producing regions
- Federal transfers equalizing fiscal capacity across poor and rich regions
- Regional control over locally generated revenues
- Transparent mechanisms preventing central government from monopolizing resources

Local Governance: Empowered local government:

- Elected local councils with real budgets and responsibilities
- Community participation in local development planning
- Authority over service delivery close to citizens

Asymmetric Arrangements: Flexibility allowing different regions different autonomy levels based on circumstances and preferences.

Coordination Mechanisms: Institutions facilitating federal-state cooperation:

- Intergovernmental forums for policy coordination
- Dispute resolution mechanisms
- National development planning incorporating regional priorities

Examples from Ethiopia's ethnic federalism (recognizing ethnic homelands), Nigeria's states, or South Africa's provinces offer lessons, while avoiding their pitfalls like stoking separatism or enabling local autocracy.

Decentralization must be genuine, not nominal federalism where central government retains effective control. This requires:

Constitutional guarantees of regional powers

Regions' financial autonomy

Central government restraint and respect for subsidiarity principle

Capacity building so regions can exercise authority effectively

## 6. ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

### 6.1 Major Ethnic Groups in Sudan

Sudan's ethnic groups warrant individual attention to understand representation needs:

**Arab Groups:** Including Ja'alin, Shaigiya, Danagla, Baggara, and others. Diverse themselves, historically dominated governance. Must remain represented while not monopolizing power.

**Fur:** Darfur's largest group, historically organized under sultanate. Suffered particularly during Darfur conflict. Deserve representation reflecting their significant population and leadership capacity.

**Zaghawa:** Trans-border group (Sudan-Chad), traditionally pastoralist, politically active. Produced some leaders but community broadly marginalized.

**Masalit:** Western Darfur agricultural people, suffered targeted violence. Representation critical for peacebuilding.

**Nubians:** Northern populations with ancient heritage, distinct languages. Suffered displacement from dam projects. Cultural and political representation needed.

**Beja:** Eastern Sudan's major indigenous group, distinct Cushitic language and culture. Historically marginalized, sometimes mobilized against government. Active in recent protests.

**Nuba:** South Kordofan's diverse groups (50+ languages), faced marginalization and violence. Representation essential for stability.

**Others:** Countless smaller groups each with legitimate representation claims.

Representation doesn't mean dividing the country into ethnic zones or rigid quotas for every group. Rather:

Major groups should have guaranteed meaningful participation in national institutions

Smaller groups' rights must be constitutionally protected even without guaranteed seats

Ethnic identity should be one factor in ensuring diversity, alongside region and gender

Coalitions and alliances across ethnic lines should be encouraged

## 6.2 Proportional Representation Models

Proportional representation (PR) systems allocate seats based on vote shares, enabling minorities to achieve representation matching their population percentages. For Sudan:

National PR: Party-list proportional representation for legislature allocates seats to parties proportional to votes received. Parties winning 15% of votes receive approximately 15% of seats, allowing minority-supported parties to gain representation.

Regional PR: Within regions/states, PR ensures local diversity reflected. Even within predominantly Arab regions or predominantly Fur regions, minorities achieve representation.

Threshold Considerations: Very low thresholds (2%) allow small parties representing specific communities to enter parliament. However, extremely low thresholds can produce excessive fragmentation. Sudan should balance inclusion with governability.

Open vs. Closed Lists: Open lists allowing voters to select individual candidates provide flexibility. Closed lists give parties control over ranking. Hybrid systems combine advantages.

Advantages for Sudan:

- Minorities needn't geographically concentrate to achieve representation
- Multiple parties can represent diversity of perspectives
- Reduces winner-takes-all zero-sum dynamics
- Proven in diverse societies globally

Challenges:

- May produce coalition governments requiring negotiations (though this can promote consensus)
- Requires political parties to organize across ethnic lines or represent specific communities
- Needs voter education about how PR works

## 6.3 Power-Sharing Arrangements

Beyond PR, power-sharing mechanisms ensure ethnic groups have not just parliamentary seats but executive authority:

Grand Coalition: Including all major groups in government coalitions ensures everyone has stakes in system. Might involve:

- Coalition governments including parties representing different ethnic constituencies
- Guaranteed positions for specific groups in executive
- Rotation arrangements where leadership positions cycle among groups

Mutual Veto: Providing communities vetoes over policies fundamentally affecting them prevents majority domination. Could involve:

- Requiring supermajorities for legislation affecting minority rights or regional interests
- Regional consent for policies affecting particular regions
- Community veto over cultural or linguistic policies affecting them

Proportionality: Allocating government positions proportional to population:

- Cabinet seats reflecting ethnic composition
- Senior civil service positions distributed proportionately
- Security sector recruitment ensuring ethnic balance

Autonomy: Granting communities control over their affairs:

- Cultural autonomy allowing minorities to manage education, language, culture
- Territorial autonomy through federalism giving regions self-governance
- Corporate autonomy through community institutions

These mechanisms draw on consociational theory (Lijphart) and experiences from:

Bosnia's post-Dayton arrangements (with lessons about preventing rigidity)

Lebanon's confessional system (demonstrating risks of freezing divisions)

Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement (showing successful transition from conflict)

South Africa's transitional Government of National Unity (temporary power-sharing easing transformation)

Critiques of power-sharing include potentially entrenching ethnic divisions and reducing democratic accountability. Mitigations include:

Designing arrangements as transitional rather than permanent

Encouraging cross-ethnic coalitions through incentives

Maintaining democratic elections alongside power-sharing

Building common institutions and national identity alongside group protections

For Sudan, power-sharing could be transitional, providing confidence during fragile post-conflict period, gradually evolving toward more competitive democracy as trust develops.

#### **6.4 Protection of Minority Rights**

Constitutional and legal protections safeguarding minorities include:

Non-Discrimination: Comprehensive equality guarantees prohibiting discrimination in:

- Political participation
- Public employment
- Education
- Economic opportunity
- Access to services

Cultural Rights: Protecting minorities' cultures, languages, and traditions:

- Language rights in education and government services
- Cultural autonomy managing community institutions
- Protection of cultural sites and heritage
- Broadcasting and media in minority languages

Religious Rights: For religious minorities:

- Freedom of worship
- Religious personal law for family matters
- Protection of religious sites
- Exemptions from majority religious laws where appropriate

Special Measures: Affirmative action and targeted programs addressing historical disadvantage.

Representation: Guaranteed political representation through quotas or reserved seats.

Autonomy: Territorial or cultural autonomy for concentrated minorities.

Veto Powers: Preventing discriminatory or harmful majority decisions.

Independent Institutions: Human rights commissions and ombudspersons investigating discrimination and protecting rights.

International Mechanisms: Sudan's ratification of international treaties providing additional protections and monitoring.

Successful minority protection requires not just formal laws but enforcement, political will, and cultural change reducing prejudice and discrimination.

## **7. GENDER INCLUSION IN GOVERNANCE**

### **7.1 Current Status of Women in Sudanese Politics**

Sudanese women have rich history of political activism but remain underrepresented in formal power:

Historical Activism: Women participated in anti-colonial movements, the 1964 and 1985 uprisings, and led the 2019 revolution. Women's organizations like the Sudanese Women's Union have advocated for rights for decades.

Revolutionary Leadership: Images of women leading chants, organizing resistance committees, and articulating democratic demands became symbols of the 2019 revolution. Women comprised significant percentages of protesters.

Limited Formal Power: Despite activism, women have held few senior government positions:

- Cabinet positions typically limited and in "soft" sectors
- Parliamentary representation varied under quotas but often without real influence
- No female president or prime minister
- Limited women in regional and local government

Current Context: The military-dominated transition and subsequent conflict have marginalized women's voices. Peace negotiations and political agreements have proceeded largely without women's participation despite international norms requiring inclusion.

Cultural Barriers: Patriarchal norms question women's leadership. Some invoke religious interpretations opposing women in authority. Traditional roles emphasize domestic responsibilities over public engagement.

However, women's movement remains vibrant, civil society organizations advocate for rights, and new generation of women leaders emerges from revolutionary activism.

## 7.2 Gender Quota Systems

Gender quotas provide proven mechanisms for increasing women's representation:

Legislative Quotas: Constitutional or legal requirements that:

- Minimum 40% of parliament seats go to women (aligning with international best practice)
- Party candidate lists include at least 40% women, preferably alternating (zipper lists)
- Reserved seats if proportional representation alone doesn't achieve targets

Executive Quotas:

- Minimum 40% of cabinet positions for women
- Gender balance in senior civil service
- Women's representation in security sector leadership

Political Party Quotas:

- Requirements that parties include women in leadership structures
- Candidate selection processes ensuring women's nomination

Local Government Quotas:

- Women's representation in local councils
- Requirements for women in traditional authority where compatible

Appointment Quotas:

- Judicial appointments ensuring women judges
- Diplomatic corps gender balance
- Board and commission gender requirements

Evidence from Rwanda (where women comprise 61% of lower house), South Africa, Nordic countries, and elsewhere shows quotas increase women's representation and can shift political culture, normalizing women's leadership.

Quota design considerations:

Temporary vs. Permanent: Initially presented as temporary measures until cultural change makes quotas unnecessary. However, persistent resistance may justify longer-term requirements.

Percentage Levels: 40% represents meaningful critical mass; lower percentages risk tokenism.

Placement Mandates: Ensuring women appear in winnable positions on party lists, not only at bottom.

Enforcement: Penalties for parties violating quotas, such as candidate list rejection.

Intersectionality: Ensuring quotas benefit diverse women (ethnic minorities, regional diversity, socioeconomic backgrounds) not only elite women.

### **7.3 Removing Structural Barriers**

Beyond quotas, removing obstacles to women's participation requires:

Legal Reform:

- Amending discriminatory laws regarding citizenship, testimony, inheritance, and family matters
- Ensuring equality in economic rights including property ownership, contract capacity, and business creation
- Criminalizing gender-based violence and harassment
- Guaranteeing reproductive rights and healthcare

Economic Empowerment:

- Access to credit and finance for women entrepreneurs
- Affirmative procurement favoring women-owned businesses
- Equal pay legislation and enforcement
- Childcare and family support enabling workforce participation

Education:

- Ensuring girls' equal access to education at all levels
- Scholarships and programs encouraging women in leadership and STEM fields
- Civic education about women's rights and capabilities

#### Political Party Reform:

- Requirements for democratic candidate selection processes
- Training and mentorship programs for women politicians
- Funding support for women candidates

#### Security:

- Protection from violence and harassment for women politicians and activists
- Police and judicial systems responsive to gender-based violence
- Security sector training on gender sensitivity

#### Cultural Change:

- Public awareness campaigns challenging stereotypes
- Highlighting successful women leaders as role models
- Religious and traditional leaders advocating women's rights
- Media representation showing diverse women's leadership

These reforms require sustained commitment, resources, and political will, but evidence shows they produce transformative results.

### **7.4 Capacity Building for Women Leaders**

Preparing women for leadership roles through:

#### Education Programs:

- Leadership training specifically for women
- Political skills development including campaigning, public speaking, media engagement
- Governance and administration training
- Technical skills in areas like budgeting, policy analysis, and law

#### Mentorship:

- Connecting emerging women leaders with experienced politicians and administrators
- Cross-generational knowledge transfer
- International exchange programs learning from women leaders elsewhere

#### Networks:

- Supporting women's political networks and coalitions
- Creating platforms for women politicians across parties to share experiences
- Building relationships across ethnic, regional, and ideological lines

#### Resources:

- Campaign financing support for women candidates
- Office and staff support for elected women
- Research and policy support capacity

#### Confidence Building:

- Addressing internalized barriers and imposter syndrome
- Creating supportive environments for women's political ambitions
- Celebrating and publicizing women's achievements

#### Family and Community Support:

- Engaging families and communities to support women's political participation
- Addressing resistance through dialogue and education
- Highlighting benefits of women's leadership for families and communities

These initiatives should target women from diverse backgrounds—different ethnic groups, regions, and socioeconomic levels—ensuring elite urban women aren't the only beneficiaries.

## **8. REGIONAL REPRESENTATION**

### **8.1 Geographic Disparities in Sudan**

Sudan's regions exhibit dramatic development disparities requiring governance responses:

**Infrastructure:** Khartoum has overwhelming infrastructure advantages—paved roads, electricity, water systems, telecommunications. Peripheral regions often lack basic infrastructure.

**Education:** Khartoum hosts the majority of universities and quality schools. Rural areas, particularly in Darfur, Kordofan, and some eastern regions, have limited educational facilities with poorly trained teachers and inadequate materials.

**Healthcare:** Specialized medical care concentrates in Khartoum. Rural populations may travel days for serious medical treatment. Maternal mortality and child mortality rates far higher in peripheral regions.

**Economic Opportunity:** Formal sector employment, business opportunities, and wealth concentrate in Khartoum. Rural areas depend on subsistence agriculture or pastoralism with limited market access.

These disparities create resentment, fuel migration to Khartoum creating urban slums, and perpetuate underdevelopment in regions with considerable potential.

## **8.2 Federal Structure Options**

Sudan should consider federal models addressing regional inequalities:

**Regional Delineation:** Creating federal states based on:

- Current state boundaries (possibly consolidating some)
- Historical regions (Darfur, Kordofan, Eastern, Northern)
- Ethnic homelands (though this risks exacerbating divisions)
- Geographic and economic considerations

**Federal Division of Powers:**

**Exclusive federal powers:** Foreign affairs, national defense, currency, citizenship, interstate commerce

**Exclusive state powers:** Local governance, education (within national standards), healthcare delivery, local police, cultural affairs, local infrastructure, land management, local taxation

**Concurrent powers:** Natural resource management, environmental protection, economic development

Upper House: Senate or Council of States with:

- Equal representation for all states regardless of population, or
- Enhanced representation for smaller/peripheral states
- Authority over federal-state relations, resource allocation, and regional interests

Fiscal Arrangements:

- Revenue sharing formulas allocating resource revenues
- Value Added Tax (VAT) or other broad tax sharing
- Derivation principle giving producing regions percentages of revenues generated in their territories
- Equalization transfers ensuring poor regions can provide adequate services
- State taxation authority

Interstate Cooperation: Mechanisms for states to cooperate on:

- Shared river basins and water resources
- Transportation corridors
- Economic development initiatives
- Peace and security along boundaries

Models to study:

Nigeria's 36 states with revenue sharing formulas, though with lessons about dependence on oil revenues and center's continued dominance

Ethiopia's ethnic federalism recognizing nations and nationalities, though current conflicts show risks of ethnic polarization

Germany's cooperative federalism balancing federal unity and regional autonomy

South Africa's provinces with cooperative governance principles

### **8.3 Regional Autonomy Mechanisms**

Beyond formal federalism, mechanisms enhancing regional self-governance:

Elected Regional Government: Direct election of governors/regional presidents and regional legislatures, rather than central appointment.

Constitutional Autonomy: Constitutional guarantees of regional powers that central government cannot override.

Legislative Authority: Regional parliaments with real lawmaking power over devolved subjects.

Judicial Systems: Regional courts adjudicating regional matters, with supreme court federating the system.

Regional Civil Service: Regions controlling their own administration and hiring, enabling local capacity building and employment.

Cultural Autonomy: Regions managing education curricula (within national frameworks), language policy, and cultural institutions.

Resource Control: Regions managing natural resources within their territories with revenue sharing.

Special Status: Particular regions might receive special autonomy based on circumstances:

- Darfur potentially as special federal region given conflict history
- Eastern Sudan recognition of Beja identity and interests
- Border regions with cross-border populations

Asymmetric federalism allows flexibility rather than uniform arrangements for all regions.

#### **8.4 Resource Allocation Frameworks**

Equitable resource distribution through:

Revenue Sharing: Clear formulas for distributing national revenues:

- Horizontal (among regions): Based on population, land area, development needs, revenue generation
- Vertical (federal-regional): Percentages to national and regional governments

Derivation Principle: Resource-producing regions receiving percentages of revenues generated from resources in their territories. Addresses historical pattern of extraction from periphery benefiting center.

Equalization Transfers: Federal transfers to poorer regions enabling adequate service provision despite lower revenue bases. Reduces inequality across regions.

Development Funds: Targeted investments in underdeveloped regions:

- Infrastructure development funds
- Education and health investment programs
- Economic development initiatives

Transparency: Public disclosure of revenue collection and allocation, preventing corruption and building trust.

Independent Institutions: Revenue allocation commissions with independent status preventing political manipulation.

Dispute Resolution: Mechanisms for resolving federal-state or interstate disputes over resources.

Sudan's oil experience before South Sudan's secession illustrated problems: Oil came primarily from South and border regions, but revenues flowed to Khartoum with minimal benefit to producing areas. This fueled grievances. New resource frameworks must avoid repeating this pattern with remaining resources like gold, agricultural wealth, or livestock.

## **9. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

### **9.1 Phased Approach and Timeline**

Inclusive governance transformation requires sequenced implementation over approximately 10 years:

Phase 1: Emergency Stabilization and Dialogue (Months 0-12)

- Cessation of hostilities and ceasefire agreements
- Humanitarian access and protection for civilians
- Inclusive national dialogue convening all stakeholders
- Establishment of transitional inclusive authority
- Initiation of constitutional process

Phase 2: Transitional Arrangements and Constitutional Process (Years 1-3)

- Broad-based transitional government representing diversity
- Constitutional convention drafting new inclusive constitution

- Referendum on new constitution
- Transitional justice mechanisms addressing past abuses
- Beginning of legal and institutional reforms
- Affirmative action programs initiated
- Voter registration and civic education

#### Phase 3: Institutional Reform and Capacity Building (Years 2-5)

- Electoral system reform implementation
- Political party development assistance
- Civil service reform and diversification
- Security sector reform ensuring ethnic/regional balance
- Judicial reform and independence
- Federalism structures established
- Regional government capacity building
- Women's leadership programs scaled up

#### Phase 4: Democratic Elections and Consolidation (Years 4-7)

- Local government elections
- Regional/state elections
- National parliamentary elections
- Presidential elections (if applicable)
- Peaceful transfer of power demonstrating system viability
- Continued affirmative action and capacity building

#### Phase 5: Deepening and Sustaining Inclusive Governance (Years 7-10+)

- Review and adjustment of inclusion mechanisms
- Addressing remaining representation gaps
- Economic development leveraging inclusive governance
- Regional integration and Pan-African engagement

- Building inclusive governance culture and norms

This timeline is ambitious and may require adjustment based on circumstances. Key is maintaining commitment to inclusion throughout all phases.

## 9.2 Institutional Reforms Required

Specific institutional changes needed:

Executive Branch:

- Inclusive cabinet formation requirements
- Gender and ethnic balance mandates
- Regional representation in senior civil service
- Merit-based recruitment with affirmative action
- Transparency and accountability mechanisms

Legislature:

- Bicameral system with diversity-sensitive design
- Reserved seats and quota implementation
- Committee structures reflecting diversity
- Legislative capacity building
- Independent research and support services

Judiciary:

- Judicial appointments ensuring diversity
- Independence from executive interference
- Access to justice in all regions and languages
- Traditional justice integration where appropriate
- Human rights training

Electoral Management:

- Independent electoral commission with diverse composition
- Professional, non-partisan administration

- Transparent procedures and result management
- Inclusive voter registration
- Accessible voting for women and marginalized groups

#### Security Sector:

- Military integration of rebel groups with attention to ethnic balance
- Security forces recruitment quotas
- Civilian control institutions
- Human rights and diversity training
- Accountability mechanisms for abuses

#### Local Government:

- Elected councils replacing appointed officials
- Devolved budgets and authority
- Capacity building for local administration
- Community participation mechanisms
- Service delivery improvement

#### Independent Institutions:

- Human Rights Commission
- Anti-Corruption Commission
- Ombudsperson offices
- Electoral Commission
- Auditor General
- Media regulatory bodies

#### Each institution requires:

- Legal frameworks establishing mandates
- Adequate budgets and resources
- Qualified, diverse personnel

- Transparent procedures
- Public accountability

### 9.3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Successful implementation requires engaging all stakeholders:

Government/State Actors:

- Current authorities must be persuaded of inclusion benefits
- Civil service requires training and buy-in
- Security forces need engagement to accept reform
- Approach: Dialogue, incentives, international pressure, demonstration of benefits

Political Parties and Movements:

- Parties must adopt inclusive candidate selection
- Coalitions across ethnic lines should be encouraged
- Opposition groups brought into political process
- Approach: Electoral system incentives, support programs, dialogue

Civil Society:

- Women's organizations as advocates and implementers
- Ethnic community organizations representing constituencies
- Youth movements mobilizing support
- Professional associations providing expertise
- Approach: Consultation, partnership, funding, capacity building

Traditional and Religious Leaders:

- Tribal and ethnic leaders can facilitate or obstruct reform
- Religious authorities influence cultural attitudes
- Engagement needed to secure support or at least neutrality

- Approach: Dialogue, respect, demonstrating compatibility with values

Private Sector:

- Business community benefits from stability
- Can support through inclusive hiring and procurement
- Investment depends on predictable environment
- Approach: Engagement, highlighting economic benefits, partnership

Regional and International Actors:

- African Union and regional organizations
- United Nations and international organizations
- Bilateral partners and donors
- Diaspora communities
- Approach: Coordination, resource mobilization, diplomatic support

Marginalized Communities:

- Those historically excluded must see tangible benefits
- Direct engagement ensuring voices heard
- Capacity building enabling participation
- Approach: Inclusive consultation, affirmative programs, empowerment

The process must be genuinely participatory, not performative consultation. Stakeholders need real influence over outcomes.

#### **9.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

Tracking progress requires robust monitoring:

Indicators:

Representation Metrics:

- Percentage of women in parliament, cabinet, civil service, judiciary
- Ethnic composition of government institutions vs. population
- Regional distribution of senior positions

- Political party leadership diversity

#### Participation Indicators:

- Voter registration and turnout by gender, ethnicity, region
- Women and minority candidates in elections
- Civil society organization membership and activity
- Political party membership diversity

#### Outcome Measures:

- Development indicators by region
- Service delivery equality across areas
- Resource allocation distribution
- Conflict incidence and intensity
- Public perception of government legitimacy and fairness

#### Process Indicators:

- Constitutional and legal reform completion
- Institutional reforms implemented
- Elections conducted per schedule
- Transitional justice progress

#### Data Collection:

- Regular censuses and surveys disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, region
- Administrative data from government institutions
- Civil society and academic research
- International observation and reporting

#### Reporting:

- Annual progress reports publicly available
- Independent evaluation by national and international bodies
- Parliamentary oversight and review

- Civil society shadow reports

Accountability:

- Corrective action when targets missed
- Sanctions for institutions failing to meet requirements
- Public pressure through transparency
- International community engagement

This framework ensures reforms don't remain on paper but translate into real change, with course corrections as needed.

## **10. LESSONS FROM COMPARATIVE CASES**

### **10.1 South Africa's Post-Apartheid Transition**

South Africa's transformation from apartheid to multiracial democracy offers valuable lessons:

**Negotiated Transition:** Rather than winner-takes-all, negotiations between National Party and ANC produced compromise constitution protecting minorities while ensuring majority rule. Lesson: Inclusive processes build buy-in.

**Interim Power-Sharing:** The Government of National Unity (1994-1999) included parties winning over 5% of votes, ensuring whites and minorities participated despite ANC majority. Lesson: Transitional power-sharing can ease fears and build confidence.

**Constitutional Protections:** Strong bill of rights, independent judiciary, and constitutional court protecting minorities and individuals from majority tyranny. Lesson: Institutions and rights protections essential alongside democracy.

**Truth and Reconciliation:** Balancing justice and reconciliation through truth commission that documented abuses while offering amnesty for those confessing. Lesson: Transitional justice can help societies confront past without endless cycles of revenge.

**Affirmative Action:** Black Economic Empowerment and employment equity addressing economic legacy of apartheid. Lesson: Political inclusion alone insufficient; economic inclusion necessary.

Challenges:

- Economic inequality persists despite political transformation

- ANC's electoral dominance reduced competitive democracy
- Corruption and governance problems emerged
- Racial tensions remain despite progress

For Sudan: South Africa shows negotiated transitions can succeed, institutional protections matter, and political inclusion must accompany economic transformation. However, avoiding one-party dominance and addressing governance quality are crucial.

## 10.2 Rwanda's Gender Representation Success

Rwanda achieved world's highest women's representation in parliament (61% in lower house):

**Constitutional Quotas:** Constitution requires 30% women in decision-making, but Rwanda exceeded this.

**Electoral System:** PR system with reserved women's seats plus women competing in open seats.

**Political Will:** Government leadership, particularly President Kagame, championed women's participation.

**Post-Genocide Context:** Genocide killed many men, necessitating women's leadership. Trauma created openness to transformation.

**Capacity Building:** Training programs preparing women for leadership.

**Cultural Change:** Shifting attitudes about women's capabilities through education and role modeling.

**Results:**

- Women hold majority in parliament
- Present in cabinet and senior positions
- Rwanda's development progress partly attributed to inclusive governance

**Challenges:**

- Questions about democratic space and authoritarian governance
- Whether women's representation translates to feminist policies debated
- Some critique women representatives as not sufficiently independent

For Sudan: Rwanda demonstrates rapid transformation possible with political will and systematic approaches. However, ensuring women's substantive power, not just numbers, is crucial. Also, inclusive gender governance must accompany broader political freedom.

### 10.3 Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism Experience

Ethiopia restructured as ethnic federation recognizing "nations, nationalities and peoples":

Federal Structure: Nine ethnically-defined regions plus two chartered cities, each with significant autonomy.

Language Policy: Working languages in regions, promoting indigenous languages.

Self-Determination: Constitutional right to self-determination including secession (though never peacefully exercised).

Representation: Upper house (House of Federation) representing ethnic groups.

Affirmative Action: Efforts to include historically marginalized groups.

Results:

- Reduced some ethnic tensions through recognition
- Enabled cultural flourishing and language development
- Provided platform for ethnic advocacy

Challenges:

- Ethnic conflicts intensified in recent years, including Tigray war
- Federalism sometimes entrenched divisions rather than managing them
- Dominant party control (EPRDF, later Prosperity Party) limited genuine autonomy
- Mixed populations in urban areas and borderlands created tensions
- Questions about who defines ethnic boundaries and identities

For Sudan: Ethiopia shows ethnic federalism can recognize diversity but requires careful design to avoid entrenching divisions. Flexibility for mixed areas, genuine autonomy rather than nominal federalism, and avoiding politicization of ethnicity are crucial lessons.

## 10.4 Kenya's Devolution Model

Kenya's 2010 constitution established devolved county government addressing historical centralization:

County Structure: 47 counties with elected governors and assemblies replacing centralized provincial administration.

Fiscal Devolution: Constitutional requirement that counties receive minimum 15% of national revenues.

Powers: Counties control local services, planning, and development.

Representation: Senate represents counties, protecting devolved system.

Gender Requirements: Constitution requires one-third gender representation in elective bodies.

Results:

- Brought government closer to citizens
- Reduced dominance of Nairobi/central region
- Enabled local development planning
- Created local political opportunities

Challenges:

- Capacity constraints in many counties
- Corruption at county level
- Tensions between national and county governments
- Ethnic patronage sometimes replicated at county level
- Uneven development across counties

For Sudan: Kenya demonstrates devolution can work in African context, bringing tangible benefits. However, avoiding simply replicating national problems at local level and building local capacity are essential. Also, devolution alone doesn't solve ethnic tensions without broader inclusion.

## 11. SUDAN AS A MODEL FOR AFRICA

## 11.1 Transferable Principles and Mechanisms

Sudan's inclusive governance could demonstrate principles applicable across Africa:

**Diversity as Strength:** Explicitly recognizing ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional diversity as national assets requiring institutional accommodation rather than problems requiring suppression.

**Institutional Design Matters:** Electoral systems, federal structures, quotas, and other mechanisms can either manage or exacerbate diversity. Intentional inclusive design produces better outcomes.

**Gender Inclusion Non-Negotiable:** Women's equal participation improves governance, development, and peace. Gender quotas and affirmative action work when systematically applied.

**Decentralization Empowers:** Bringing government close to citizens through genuine devolution improves services and reduces marginalization.

**Power-Sharing Transitions:** Post-conflict societies benefit from inclusive power-sharing arrangements building confidence before competitive elections.

**Constitutionalism Protects:** Strong constitutions with rights protections and institutional checks prevent majority tyranny.

**Economic Inclusion Matters:** Political representation alone insufficient; equitable resource distribution necessary.

**Process Matters:** Inclusive processes for constitution-making, peace negotiations, and reform build legitimacy and buy-in.

These principles aren't Sudan-specific. Most African countries grapple with ethnic diversity, regional inequalities, and gender gaps. Sudan succeeding would provide African-owned template rather than external imposition.

## 11.2 Pan-African Governance Standards

Sudan's transformation aligns with African Union standards:

**African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance:** Commits states to democratic principles, human rights, and good governance. Inclusive governance fulfills these commitments.

**Agenda 2063:** AU's development vision emphasizes inclusive growth, good governance, and peace. Sudan would exemplify these priorities.

African Governance Architecture: AU framework promoting democratic governance, which Sudan's reforms would strengthen.

Women's Rights Instruments: Maputo Protocol and other AU commitments to gender equality that Sudan would operationalize.

APRM (African Peer Review Mechanism): Voluntary governance assessment mechanism that could monitor Sudan's progress and share lessons.

Sudan succeeding would strengthen Pan-African governance norms, demonstrating African solutions to African challenges. It would validate AU principles through practical implementation.

### **11.3 Regional Integration Benefits**

Inclusive governance facilitates regional integration:

IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development): Sudan's stability benefits regional organization, enabling focus on development rather than conflict management.

Common Market Integration: Stable, well-governed Sudan can participate meaningfully in East African and Sahel economic integration.

Cross-Border Cooperation: Many Sudanese ethnic groups straddle borders (Zaghawa in Chad, Beja in Eritrea, groups in South Sudan). Inclusive governance reduces tensions over these populations.

Resource Sharing: Nile waters, transboundary resources, and shared ecosystems require cooperative management that stable governance enables.

Migration Management: Addressing root causes of migration through inclusive development reduces pressures on neighbors.

Security Cooperation: Regional counterterrorism, conflict prevention, and peacekeeping benefit from Sudan as partner rather than problem.

Economic Opportunity: Sudan's agricultural potential, strategic location, and market size offer regional benefits if stability allows development.

Inclusive governance transforms Sudan from regional challenge to regional asset, benefiting neighboring countries and integration projects.

### **11.4 Conflict Prevention Potential**

African countries can learn from Sudan's experience preventing exclusion-driven conflicts:

**Early Warning:** Monitoring representation gaps and marginalization before they erupt into violence.

**Preventive Inclusion:** Proactively including potentially marginalized groups rather than waiting for rebellion.

**Structural Prevention:** Designing institutions that distribute power rather than concentrating it.

**Economic Inclusion:** Ensuring development reaches all regions and groups, removing grievances fueling conflict.

**Security Sector Inclusion:** Armed forces reflecting diversity reduce risks of ethnic manipulation or rebellion.

**Dialogue Mechanisms:** Institutionalized forums for groups to air grievances and negotiate solutions peacefully.

Many African conflicts—CAR, DRC, Mali, South Sudan, Somalia—involve exclusion dynamics similar to Sudan's. Learning from Sudan's transformation could help prevent similar trajectories elsewhere.

Regional organizations could establish:

- Early warning systems for exclusion-related tensions
- Best practice sharing on inclusion mechanisms
- Technical assistance for countries designing inclusive institutions
- Peer support networks for implementation

Sudan's success would save countless lives and resources across Africa by preventing conflicts before they start.

## **12. CHALLENGES AND RISK MITIGATION**

### **12.1 Political Resistance and Opposition**

Inevitable resistance from those benefiting from current arrangements:

Elite Opposition: Political and military elites enjoying disproportionate power will resist redistribution. They may:

- Obstruct reforms through legislative blocking
- Use violence or coups to derail processes
- Mobilize ethnic fears against inclusion
- Co-opt reforms while maintaining real power

Mitigation:

- International pressure and conditionality
- Demonstrating benefits even for current elites (stability, development, legitimacy)
- Dividing opposition through incentives for cooperation
- Building coalitions between reform-minded elites and marginalized groups
- Sanctions and accountability for spoilers

Ethnic Mobilization: Some may fear inclusion threatens "their" group's position, mobilizing ethnic nationalism against diversity.

Mitigation:

- Framing inclusion as benefiting all, not zero-sum
- Ensuring majority groups retain appropriate representation
- Building cross-ethnic coalitions
- Education and dialogue reducing fears
- Constitutional protections for all groups

Patriarchal Backlash: Gender inclusion will face opposition from those invested in male dominance.

Mitigation:

- Engaging religious and traditional leaders to support women's rights
- Highlighting Islamic and cultural precedents for women's leadership
- Demonstrating economic benefits of gender equality
- Building women's movements and male allies

- Legal protections and enforcement

Military Resistance: Armed forces may resist civilian control and inclusion requirements.

Mitigation:

- Security sector reform with international support
- Vetting and professionalization
- Demonstrating military benefits from civilian oversight
- Regional examples of successful civil-military relations
- Transitional guarantees for military interests

## **12.2 Capacity and Resource Constraints**

Sudan faces significant capacity limitations:

Human Capacity: Decades of conflict and underinvestment left capacity gaps:

- Shortage of qualified administrators, particularly in peripheral regions
- Limited technical expertise for complex reforms
- Brain drain from conflict and emigration

Mitigation:

- Intensive capacity building and training programs
- Diaspora engagement bringing skills and resources
- International technical assistance
- South-South cooperation learning from other African countries
- Incremental implementation allowing learning

Financial Resources: Sudan faces severe economic constraints:

- Debt burdens limiting fiscal space
- Sanctions and limited international investment
- Conflict damage requiring reconstruction
- Poverty reducing tax base

Mitigation:

- Debt relief initiatives
- International development assistance conditioned on inclusive governance
- Domestic resource mobilization through improved tax collection
- Reducing corruption freeing resources
- Prioritizing reforms with highest impact per dollar spent

Infrastructure Deficits: Particularly in peripheral regions, basic infrastructure lacking.

Mitigation:

- Targeted infrastructure investment in marginalized areas
- Public-private partnerships
- Regional and community participation in development
- Appropriate technology solutions
- Phased development as resources allow

Institutional Weakness: Many government institutions dysfunctional or corrupted.

Mitigation:

- Institutional reforms alongside inclusion
- Anti-corruption measures
- Merit-based recruitment and promotion
- International support for institution building
- Learning from successful African examples

### **12.3 Cultural and Traditional Barriers**

Deep-rooted cultural patterns may resist change:

Patriarchy: Traditional gender roles and male authority resist women's empowerment.

Mitigation:

- Engaging traditional and religious leaders

- Demonstrating compatibility with religious values
- Generational change through youth education
- Economic incentives for gender equality
- Legal reforms establishing women's rights

Ethnic Stereotypes: Prejudices about different groups' capabilities or trustworthiness.

Mitigation:

- Education and awareness campaigns
- Positive examples of minority leaders
- Interethnic dialogue and cooperation
- Shared national narratives and symbols
- Punishing discrimination

Authoritarianism: Decades of authoritarian rule created culture of compliance rather than participation.

Mitigation:

- Civic education about democratic rights and responsibilities
- Grassroots organizing and empowerment
- Protecting civil society space
- Democratic political culture development
- Generational change

Centralization Mindset: Assumptions that Khartoum must control everything.

Mitigation:

- Demonstrating benefits of decentralization
- Successful examples from early-implementing regions
- Constitutional guarantees for regional autonomy
- Building regional capacity reducing dependence

These cultural barriers require long-term transformation, not just legal reforms. Patient, sustained engagement with communities necessary.

## 12.4 Regional and International Interference

External actors may pursue interests contrary to inclusive governance:

Regional Actors: Sudan's neighbors have stakes in its trajectory:

- Egypt fears instability threatening Nile waters and border security
- Gulf states pursue strategic interests sometimes supporting particular factions
- Ethiopia has interests in Nile and border regions
- Chad, CAR, South Sudan affected by instability spillover

Mitigation:

- Regional dialogue and assurance that inclusive governance serves neighbors' interests
- IGAD and AU engagement coordinating regional support
- Addressing legitimate regional concerns through cooperation
- Reducing opportunities for interference through strong national institutions

Great Power Competition: External powers may prioritize strategic interests over governance:

- Competition for influence, resources, or bases
- Support for particular factions undermining inclusive processes

Mitigation:

- Coordinated international support through UN and AU
- Conditioning external assistance on inclusive governance
- Building strong enough national institutions to resist manipulation
- Diversifying international partnerships avoiding dependence

Spoilers: External actors may benefit from Sudan's instability:

- Conflict economies and smuggling networks
- Political actors using Sudan for proxy conflicts

Mitigation:

- Regional security cooperation disrupting illicit networks
- International sanctions on spoilers
- Border controls and cooperation with neighbors
- Reducing incentives for spoiling through inclusive development

The key is building robust national institutions and processes that can withstand external pressures, while engaging constructively with legitimate international support for inclusive governance.

## **13. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

### **13.1 Financial Investment Needs**

Inclusive governance transformation requires substantial but justifiable investment:

Constitutional and Electoral Processes: \$50-100 million

- Constitutional convention and consultation processes
- Voter registration and civic education
- Electoral system reform and elections
- Referendum processes

Institutional Reform: \$200-300 million

- Civil service reform and capacity building
- Judicial reform and training
- Security sector reform
- Local government establishment and capacity building
- Independent institution creation

Affirmative Action Programs: \$150-250 million

- Women's leadership development
- Minority capacity building
- Educational programs in marginalized regions

- Economic empowerment initiatives

Infrastructure for Devolution: \$500 million - \$1 billion

- Regional government facilities
- Communication and IT systems
- Service delivery infrastructure in peripheral regions

Transitional Justice: \$75-150 million

- Truth and reconciliation processes
- Reparations programs
- Accountability mechanisms

Monitoring and Evaluation: \$25-50 million

- Data collection and analysis
- Independent evaluation
- Reporting systems

Total Estimated Investment: \$1-2 billion over 10 years, or \$100-200 million annually.

This seems substantial but pales compared to conflict costs. Sudan's conflicts have caused tens of billions in damage, displacement costs, lost productivity, and foregone development. Inclusive governance is far cheaper than continued instability.

Funding Sources:

- Domestic revenues (as fiscal capacity improves)
- International development assistance
- Debt relief freeing fiscal space
- African Development Bank and World Bank
- Bilateral donors conditioning aid on governance reform
- Diaspora contributions
- Private sector partnership

### **13.2 Technical Assistance Requirements**

Beyond funding, Sudan needs expertise:

**Constitutional Design:** International constitutional experts supporting inclusive constitution drafting, learning from comparative experiences.

**Electoral Systems:** Technical assistance designing and implementing PR, quota systems, and electoral administration.

**Federal Systems:** Expertise on federalism, fiscal federalism, and intergovernmental relations from countries with successful devolution.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** Specialists in gender equality and women's political participation supporting quota implementation and cultural change.

**Civil Service Reform:** Public administration experts supporting meritocratic, inclusive civil service development.

**Security Sector Reform:** SSR specialists ensuring military integration, professionalization, and civilian control.

**Transitional Justice:** Expertise from other post-conflict societies on truth commissions, reconciliation, and accountability.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** M&E specialists designing systems tracking inclusion progress.

**Legal Reform:** Legal experts supporting anti-discrimination legislation, rights protections, and legal harmonization.

Sources:

- UN Development Programme, UN Women, UNDP
- African Union and IGAD
- International IDEA, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute
- Academic institutions and think tanks
- Bilateral technical cooperation programs
- South-South cooperation from African countries with relevant experience

This technical assistance should build Sudanese capacity rather than creating dependence, with knowledge transfer and training prioritized.

### **13.3 International Support and Partnerships**

Successful implementation requires coordinated international support:

United Nations:

- Political support through Security Council and General Assembly
- Technical assistance through UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR
- Peacekeeping or observation missions if needed
- Coordination of humanitarian and development aid

African Union:

- Political legitimacy and peer pressure
- Technical support through AU Commission and APRM
- Mediation and good offices for dialogue processes
- Regional coordination through IGAD

International Financial Institutions:

- World Bank development financing linked to governance reforms
- IMF programs conditioning support on inclusive institution building
- African Development Bank targeted programs for marginalized regions

Bilateral Partners:

- Norway, Sweden, other Nordic countries with gender equality and governance expertise
- UK, EU support for democratic governance
- African countries sharing experiences (South Africa, Rwanda, Kenya)
- Gulf states providing financing

Civil Society and Foundations:

- International and regional NGOs supporting grassroots inclusion
- Philanthropic foundations funding women's empowerment and minority rights
- Academic partnerships for research and evaluation

Private Sector:

- Corporate partnerships for economic inclusion

- Investment contingent on stability from inclusive governance

This support should be:

- Coordinated to avoid duplication and fragmentation
- Respectful of Sudanese ownership and leadership
- Conditional on genuine inclusive governance progress, not performative reforms
- Long-term, recognizing transformation takes time
- Flexible, adapting to changing circumstances

Partnership structures:

- International Contact Group coordinating support
- Multi-donor trust funds pooling resources
- Regular review meetings assessing progress
- Technical working groups on specific issues

### **13.4 Sustainability Planning**

Ensuring reforms outlast international attention requires:

**Institutionalization:** Embedding inclusion in permanent institutions and laws rather than temporary programs dependent on external funding.

**Domestic Financing:** Gradually shifting from international to domestic resource mobilization as economy recovers.

**Capacity Development:** Building Sudanese expertise rather than perpetual dependence on foreign advisors.

**Political Culture:** Fostering democratic, inclusive political culture where inclusion becomes norm, not imposition.

**Constitutional Protection:** Strong constitutional entrenchment making reforms difficult to reverse.

**Civil Society:** Vibrant civil society continuing to demand accountability even when international attention wanes.

**Economic Development:** Inclusive governance enabling economic growth that generates resources for sustaining reforms.

Generational Change: Young generation educated in inclusive values carrying them forward.

Regional Integration: Embedding Sudan in regional frameworks supporting inclusive governance.

Success Stories: Demonstrating tangible benefits of inclusion creating constituencies defending reforms.

The goal is reaching "lock-in"—where inclusive governance becomes self-sustaining because enough stakeholders benefit and believe in it that reversal becomes impossible.

## **14. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **14.1 Short-Term Priority Actions (0-18 months)**

Immediate steps to begin transformation:

Ceasefire and Stabilization:

- Negotiate comprehensive ceasefire between all armed parties
- Humanitarian access for populations in conflict zones
- Protection of civilians and human rights monitoring

Inclusive Transitional Authority:

- Establish genuinely inclusive transitional government representing ethnic diversity, gender balance, and regional spread
- Transitional authority to guide process until elections, with clear timeline and mandate
- Inclusion of civil society, women's groups, and marginalized communities

Constitutional Dialogue:

- Launch inclusive constitutional dialogue involving all stakeholders
- Public consultations ensuring broad participation
- Technical support for constitutional drafting incorporating inclusive governance principles

Justice and Accountability:

- Transitional justice framework addressing past abuses
- Truth-telling processes beginning while memories fresh
- Accountability mechanisms for recent conflict crimes

#### Legal Reforms:

- Immediate repeal of most discriminatory laws, particularly affecting women
- Adoption of interim constitutional provisions protecting rights
- Electoral law reform incorporating quotas and PR

#### Capacity Building:

- Launch women's leadership programs
- Begin civil service training emphasizing merit and diversity
- Initiate civic education about inclusive governance

#### Security Sector:

- Begin security sector reform dialogue
- Plan for integration of armed groups with ethnic balance
- Civilian oversight mechanisms

#### International Engagement:

- Secure international support and commitments
- Coordinate donor assistance
- Establish monitoring framework

These immediate actions create foundation for longer-term transformation.

### **14.2 Medium-Term Structural Reforms (18 months - 5 years)**

#### Deeper institutional changes:

##### Constitutional Completion:

- Finalize inclusive constitution through participatory process
- Referendum on constitution

- Constitutional implementation legislation

#### Electoral Processes:

- Voter registration using inclusive approaches reaching marginalized groups
- Electoral system implementation with PR, quotas, and safeguards
- Political party development with diversity requirements
- Local and regional elections preceding national polls
- National elections with international observation

#### Federal System:

- Establish federal structure with meaningful regional autonomy
- Create regional governments with elected leadership
- Implement fiscal federalism and revenue sharing
- Build regional administrative capacity

#### Institutional Reform:

- Complete civil service reform with merit-based recruitment and diversity targets
- Judicial reform establishing independence and diversity
- Create and operationalize independent institutions (electoral commission, human rights commission, etc.)
- Security sector integration and professionalization

#### Affirmative Action:

- Full implementation of gender quotas
- Ethnic and regional affirmative action in public sector
- Educational programs for marginalized communities
- Economic empowerment initiatives

#### Transitional Justice:

- Truth commission completing work and issuing report
- Reparations programs for victims
- Accountability mechanisms for perpetrators

- Reconciliation initiatives

Decentralization:

- Transfer powers and resources to regions
- Local government elections and empowerment
- Service delivery improvements demonstrating devolution benefits

These reforms transform governance structures from exclusionary to inclusive.

### **14.3 Long-Term Vision and Goals (5-10+ years)**

Sustained commitment to:

Consolidating Democracy:

- Multiple successful election cycles demonstrating system stability
- Peaceful power transfers across different governments
- Mature multi-party democracy with loyal opposition
- Civil-military relations with military under civilian authority

Deepening Inclusion:

- Continued progress toward gender parity in all institutions
- Proportional ethnic representation becoming norm
- Regional development reducing disparities
- Elimination of discrimination in practice, not just law

Economic Transformation:

- Inclusive economic development benefiting all regions and groups
- Women's economic empowerment and participation
- Peripheral regions' economic development
- Poverty reduction and shared prosperity

Social Cohesion:

- National identity embracing diversity

- Reduced ethnic tensions and prejudice
- Interethnic cooperation and coalition-building
- Reconciliation and healing from conflicts

Regional Leadership:

- Sudan as model for inclusive governance in Africa
- Active participation in regional integration
- Sharing lessons with other countries
- Contributing to Pan-African development

Institutional Maturity:

- Strong, independent institutions protecting rights
- Effective, accountable government at all levels
- Professional civil service and security forces
- Vibrant civil society and free media

The ultimate vision: Sudan as stable, democratic, prosperous nation where every citizen—regardless of ethnicity, gender, or region—has equal dignity, opportunity, and voice in shaping the country's future.

#### **14.4 Policy Recommendations**

Specific policy guidance for stakeholders:

For Sudanese Government/Transitional Authorities:

- Commit unconditionally to inclusive governance as core principle
- Establish inclusive transitional authority immediately
- Launch constitutional process with broad participation
- Implement quick-win reforms demonstrating commitment
- Accept international support and monitoring

For Political Parties:

- Adopt internal democracy and inclusive candidate selection

- Build cross-ethnic coalitions rather than ethnic parties
- Prioritize women's leadership within party structures
- Develop programmatic platforms beyond ethnic appeals
- Commit to democratic competition and acceptance of results

For Civil Society:

- Mobilize constituencies for inclusive governance
- Monitor implementation and hold leaders accountable
- Participate actively in constitutional and policy processes
- Build coalitions across ethnic and regional lines
- Provide civic education and voter mobilization

For International Partners:

- Coordinate support through collective frameworks
- Condition assistance on genuine inclusive governance progress
- Provide patient, long-term support recognizing transformation takes time
- Respect Sudanese ownership while supporting best practices
- Use leverage to prevent backsliding or spoiling

For Regional Organizations (AU, IGAD):

- Provide political support and legitimacy for reforms
- Facilitate dialogue and mediation when needed
- Share African experiences and expertise
- Monitor progress through APRM and other mechanisms
- Integrate Sudan into regional governance and development frameworks

For Women's Organizations:

- Continue mobilizing for gender equality
- Build broad coalitions across ethnic and regional lines
- Demand implementation of quotas and affirmative action

- Prepare women for leadership through training and support
- Document and publicize women's achievements

For Ethnic and Regional Movements:

- Engage constructively in constitutional and political processes
- Build alliances across groups with shared inclusion interests
- Articulate interests within democratic framework rather than through violence
- Participate in power-sharing and devolution arrangements
- Hold government accountable for implementation

For Academic and Research Institutions:

- Document Sudan's transformation for learning
- Provide rigorous evaluation of what works
- Support with comparative research and expertise
- Train next generation of inclusive leaders
- Engage public through accessible communication

These recommendations provide roadmap for diverse actors to contribute to Sudan's inclusive governance transformation.

## 15. CONCLUSION

Sudan stands at a defining moment. The country can continue cycles of exclusion, conflict, and instability that have characterized much of its post-independence history, or it can choose a fundamentally different path—one of inclusive governance that represents Sudan's remarkable ethnic, gender, and regional diversity.

This proposal has demonstrated why inclusive governance matters. The evidence is overwhelming: countries that embrace diversity in their leadership structures enjoy greater political stability, stronger economic performance, better development outcomes, and more cohesive societies. Conversely, exclusionary governance has been the primary driver of Sudan's conflicts, from the decades-long civil war with the South to the Darfur crisis to ongoing tensions in peripheral regions.

The human cost of exclusion is staggering. Millions displaced, hundreds of thousands killed, generations denied education and opportunity, vast resources squandered on conflict rather than development. The economic cost runs to tens of billions of dollars in destruction, lost productivity, and foregone growth. The social cost includes shattered communities, traumatized populations, and deep wells of grievance and mistrust.

Inclusive governance offers a pathway out of this tragic history. By ensuring that Fur and Zaghawa, Nuba and Beja, Nubians and Arabs all see themselves in national institutions—by guaranteeing women equal voice in decisions affecting their lives—by giving regions genuine autonomy to chart their own development—Sudan can transform diversity from a source of conflict into a wellspring of strength.

The framework presented in this proposal is comprehensive but implementable. Constitutional and legal reforms can enshrine inclusion principles. Electoral system design using proportional representation and quotas can ensure minorities achieve representation. Federal structures can give regions the autonomy they've long demanded. Power-sharing mechanisms can protect against ethnic domination. Affirmative action can accelerate the participation of historically marginalized groups.

Implementation will be challenging. Political and military elites who have monopolized power will resist sharing it. Patriarchal structures will oppose gender equality. Resource constraints will limit what can be achieved quickly. Cultural barriers will slow change. Regional and international actors may pursue interests contrary to genuine inclusion.

Yet these challenges are not insurmountable. International support can provide resources and expertise. Civil society mobilization can create pressure for reform. Generational change as youth educated in inclusive values come of age can shift political culture. Most importantly, the tangible benefits of inclusive governance—stability, development, opportunity—can create constituencies demanding its continuation.

The timeline is necessarily ambitious but realistic: moving from immediate stabilization and dialogue through constitutional processes and institutional reform to democratic elections and ultimately consolidated inclusive democracy over approximately ten years. This may seem long, but it's far shorter than the decades Sudan has lost to conflict.

The resources required are substantial but pale compared to the costs of continued instability. Investing \$1-2 billion over a decade in inclusive governance transformation is trivial compared to the tens of billions lost to conflict and the hundreds of billions in foregone development. Every dollar invested in inclusion saves multiples in conflict prevention and enables manifold returns through unlocked potential.

Sudan's success in this transformation would resonate far beyond its borders. Many African countries grapple with similar challenges: ethnic diversity requiring political accommodation, gender inequality demanding redress, regional disparities needing

equitable development, post-conflict transitions requiring justice and reconciliation. Sudan successfully building inclusive governance would provide an African-owned model demonstrating that deeply divided societies can create democratic political communities.

The principles are transferable: recognizing diversity as strength, designing institutions to manage rather than suppress differences, ensuring women's equal participation, devolving power to bring government close to citizens, protecting minorities constitutionally, sharing resources equitably, balancing justice and reconciliation. These aren't Sudan-specific prescriptions but broadly applicable approaches to governance in diverse societies.

Sudan's transformation would strengthen Pan-African governance norms. It would demonstrate the relevance of African Union standards and instruments. It would show that African solutions to African problems can work. It would inspire other countries undertaking similar transitions. It would contribute to continental aspirations for democracy, development, and integration.

The current moment—despite its tragedy—offers opportunity. The devastation of the current conflict has discredited exclusionary governance and militarized politics. There is yearning across Sudanese society for something different, something better. Women's revolutionary activism has demonstrated leadership capacity. Marginalized communities have articulated their demands. International attention provides leverage and resources. Regional dynamics favor stability.

What's needed now is political will—courageous leadership willing to embrace inclusion even when it means sharing power, visionary thinking that prioritizes long-term stability over short-term advantage, moral commitment to equality and justice as foundational principles.

This proposal calls on all Sudanese stakeholders to make that commitment. To the political and military leaders: recognize that monopolizing power has failed and that sharing it offers the only sustainable path forward. To the traditional authorities: embrace the reality that Sudan's diversity requires political accommodation. To the women's movement: continue pushing for equal participation and don't settle for tokenism. To ethnic and regional movements: engage constructively in constitutional and political processes rather than taking up arms. To civil society: mobilize constituencies and hold leaders accountable.

It calls on international partners to provide patient, sustained support conditioned on genuine progress toward inclusion. To regional organizations to use leverage for democratic governance. To donors to align assistance with inclusive governance principles. To neighboring countries to respect Sudanese processes rather than pursuing narrow interests.

Most importantly, it calls on ordinary Sudanese citizens—the farmer in Darfur, the merchant in Khartoum, the herder in eastern Sudan, the professional in Port Sudan, the student in Kordofan—to demand their rightful place in their country's governance and to insist that their leaders build a Sudan for all Sudanese.

The choice is clear: continued exclusion leading to perpetual conflict, or inclusive governance enabling peace, development, and dignity for all. The path forward is mapped. The resources can be mobilized. The international support is available. The only question is whether Sudan's leaders and citizens have the courage and vision to seize this moment.

History will judge this generation of Sudanese by whether they chose inclusion or exclusion, whether they built a nation that celebrates diversity or one that weaponizes it, whether they created institutions that serve all citizens or ones that privilege narrow elites.

The time for half-measures has passed. The time for bold transformation is now. Sudan can become a beacon of inclusive governance for Africa and the world. The opportunity exists. The question is whether it will be grasped.

This proposal ends with hope—hope that Sudan can overcome its tragic history, hope that diversity can be governed democratically, hope that Africa's greatest challenges can be solved through visionary leadership and inclusive institutions, hope that Sudan's children will inherit a country worthy of their potential.

Let that hope guide the hard work ahead.

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United Nations Women Sudan website

World Bank Sudan overview

Note on Sources:

This proposal draws on extensive academic literature, policy reports, legal instruments, and empirical data on Sudan, inclusive governance, comparative experiences, and related topics. Given the conflict situation and ongoing developments in Sudan, some information, particularly on current political arrangements, required web search and recent reporting to ensure accuracy as of February 2026. The comparative case studies on South Africa, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Kenya are based on published academic and policy literature as well as official government and international organization documentation.

The constitutional and institutional recommendations build on international best practices documented by organizations like International IDEA, the United Nations Development Programme, NDI, IRI, and academic research on electoral systems, federalism, and power-sharing arrangements.

For readers seeking deeper engagement with particular aspects of this proposal, the cited sources provide comprehensive entry points into the relevant literature and data.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC - African National Congress (South Africa)

APRM - African Peer Review Mechanism

AU - African Union

CAR - Central African Republic

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005)

DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo

EPRDF - Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (Ethiopia)

FFC - Forces of Freedom and Change (Sudan)

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

ICG - International Crisis Group

ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

IDEA - International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IGAD - Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IMF - International Monetary Fund

IRI - International Republican Institute

M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation

NDI - National Democratic Institute

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

OHCHR - Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

PR - Proportional Representation

RSF - Rapid Support Forces (Sudan)

SAF - Sudanese Armed Forces (Sudan)

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SSR - Security Sector Reform

UAE - United Arab Emirates

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

VAT - Value Added Tax

**END OF PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

RESTRICTED use