

RETHINKING AID IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE KAMPALA MEETING¹ • NOVEMBER 2025

This policy brief shares the findings of a series of conversations instigated by recent dramatic shifts in international development and humanitarian aid, specifically with reference to Sudan and South Sudan. The goal of this paper is to distil and amplify the messages of Sudanese and South Sudanese civil society representatives.

INTRODUCTION

The interconnected human rights and humanitarian crises in Sudan and South Sudan have reached a historic peak in terms of people affected and severity of suffering, with few signs of abatement. Despite this, there has recently been a severe drop-off in the levels of international support available.²

Both in the two Sudans and elsewhere, conflict-related displacement is no longer primarily driven by conventional civil wars. Rather, the effects of climate breakdown and ever more complex conflict dynamics are being compounded by the attempts of multiple global actors to exert influence, as well as the availability of cheaper but more devastating weapons. In the face of such complexities, traditional (mainly Western) international actors have come under growing domestic political and economic pressures. Additionally, as the distribution and nature of global power changes, these traditional actors have found themselves less able to contribute to diplomatic solutions.

Against the above backdrop, this policy brief examines the dramatic shifts in international development and humanitarian aid seen in Sudan and South Sudan, which have primarily been marked by reduced financial assistance.³ Regardless of the negative impacts arising from this, the resultant transition offers opportunities to embrace more innovative, sustainable, and value-driven national and regional humanitarian initiatives.⁴

Even so, it is important to acknowledge the widespread ‘famine-like’ conditions and deteriorating humanitarian situation confronting Sudan and South Sudan. In the former, famine has been

1 Convened 4–5 November 2025 by Norwegian People’s Aid–Sudan, Detro, ODI Global (with support provided under the ‘Advisory Panel to Support the Future of Humanitarian Action initiative’) and the Rift Valley Institute (RVI). The participants gratefully acknowledge Awak Bior’s effort leading the drafting of this briefing.

2 UNOCHA, ‘Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025’, December 2024. <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1220>; European Commission, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), ‘South Sudan: Facts & Figures’, 2025. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/south-sudan_en.

3 ALNAP, *Global Humanitarian Assistance 2025*, London: ALNAP/ODI, 2025. <https://alnapp.org/help-library/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-gha-report-2025-e-report/>

4 F. M. Deng, ‘A Call for an End to Dependency: A Piece of Advice from an Elder’, *Atar: Sudan in Perspective* 37 (6 October 2025): 5–13. <https://atarnetwork.com/?p=16140>.

declared in four areas, while in the latter, successive crises have left 60 per cent of the population severely food insecure.⁵

The challenges facing the two countries are addressed in conjunction for several reasons, the first and foremost being their shared history. Sudan's humanitarian crisis, as well as its social, political and economic well-being more generally, has tangible impacts on South Sudan, and vice versa. Additionally, their respective political crises have both been driven by weaponized identities, coupled with the centralization of resources, power and development. Lastly, the two countries have both seen mass displacement—internal and external—arising from conflict, alongside rampant human rights abuses and deliberate starvation. In each case, the warring parties have applied similar methods intended to cause maximum harm to civilians.

There is an understanding among South Sudanese and Sudanese people that it is not only their countries' conflicts that are interconnected, but also the potential solutions to them. Of particular note in this regard is how grassroots actors have sought to support their communities during times of crisis.

The ultimate goal of this policy brief is to amplify the voices of the 45 Sudanese and South Sudanese civil society representatives—representing more than 30 grassroots organizations and international NGOs—who gathered in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2025. The recommendations provided are based on the current realities of the humanitarian landscape and the resolutions put forward at the November meeting.

BACKGROUND

In early 2025, the US government issued a global 'stop work' order, effectively crippling the US Agency for International Development (USAID)'s humanitarian and development programmes.⁶ Within six weeks, more than 80 per cent of USAID assistance programmes had been shut down.⁷

The consequences for long-term aid-dependent countries such as South Sudan—which had enjoyed USAID assistance reportedly amounting to USD 7.3 billion since 2011⁸—were immediate and harsh. In Sudan's case, USAID had contributed 44 per cent of humanitarian aid flows following the country's 2023 collapse into civil war, including financing for community kitchens and disease prevention and treatment programmes.⁹ Since the USAID shutdowns, there have

5 UN News, 'Famine tightens grip on Sudan, with civilians trapped and aid blocked', 3 November 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166253>; International Crisis Group, 'Succession Crisis Drives South Sudan toward Famine', 17 June 2025. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/south-sudan/succession-crisis-drives-south-sudan-toward-famine>.

6 Fatma Tanis, 'U.S. puts virtually all foreign aid on 90-day hold, issues "stop-work" order', *NPR*, 24 January 2025. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goats-and-soda/2025/01/24/g-s1-44643/trump-foreign-aid-assistance-pause>.

7 *Reuters*, 'Trump administration scraps over 80% of USAID programs, top diplomat Rubio says', 10 March 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-scraps-over-80-usaid-programs-top-diplomat-rubio-says-2025-03-10/>.

8 USAID, 'The United States Provides More Than \$57 Million in Humanitarian Assistance for South Sudan', 5 July 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/united-states-provides-more-57-million-humanitarian-assistance-south-sudan>.

9 ACAPS, 'Sudan: Implications of US Aid Funding Cuts', Thematic Report, 13 March 2025. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/acaps-thematic-report-sudan-implications-us-aid-funding-cuts-13-march-2025>.

been reports of escalating starvation and food insecurity in both countries, as well as increasing numbers of children dying from preventable diseases. Moreover, the resultant job losses have destabilized family support structures, negatively impacting mental health and contributing to family breakdowns.

The swingeing cuts implemented by the US government have also affected multilateral institutions, with the most adverse impacts felt by United Nations agencies such as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), World Health Organization and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).¹⁰ In early 2025, UN Secretary-General António Guterres drew attention to the domino effects of the US financial clawback, predicting that, 'US aid cuts will make the world less healthy, less safe and less prosperous'.¹¹ Faced with a funding shortfall of USD 1.3 billion compared to the previous year, UNHCR recently announced a 30 per cent cut in its workforce and the closing or consolidation of 185 offices.¹²

Turning to Sudan and South Sudan specifically, the figures involved are stark. Of the USD 4.2 billion requested to assist 21 million internally displaced people under Sudan's Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, just 6.3 per cent has been received.¹³ Meanwhile, South Sudan's 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan faces a 59 per cent shortfall, leaving the country with the lowest level of funding since the country gained independence in 2011.¹⁴ All this comes at a time when the UN's Economic and Social Council has expressed deep concerns about South Sudan's protracted crises, which risk a return to civil war.¹⁵

Sudan continues to experience the world's biggest displacement crisis: more than 9 million people have been internally displaced, with several million more fleeing across the border.¹⁶ This comes at a time when Sudan's neighbours—including South Sudan, which hosts the region's second-largest Sudanese refugee population—are already dealing with sizeable political, economic and displacement crises.¹⁷ In both Sudan and South Sudan, the prospects for short-to-medium-term stability remain bleak, placing the onus on those in the development and humanitarian sector to engage with national actors during this period of major transition.

10 *Al Jazeera*, 'UN refugee agency warns funding cuts will leave over 11 million without aid', 18 July 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/18/un-refugee-agency-warns-funding-cuts-will-leave-over-11m-without-aid>.

11 UN News, 'US aid cuts will make world "less healthy, less safe and less prosperous": Guterres', 28 February 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/1160646/02/2025>.

12 UNHCR, 'Statement by the High Commissioner to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly', 6 November 2025. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/speeches-and-statements/unhcr-high-commissioner-s-statement-third-committee-un-general-assembly>.

13 UNOCHA, 'Sudan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025: Overview', 2025. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-overview>.

14 Oxfam, 'Millions stranded by conflict and aid cuts in South Sudan drive surge in suffering', 26 November 2025. <https://africa.oxfam.org/latest/press-release/millions-stranded-conflict-and-aid-cuts-south-sudan-drive-surge-suffering>.

15 UNECOSOC, 'Implementation of integrated, coherent and coordinated support for South Sudan and the Sahel region by the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General', Advance Unedited Version, 2025. https://ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/-2025/06-2025SG-Report_South-Sudan-and-Sahel_Advance-Unedited-V.pdf.

16 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), 'Press release on the catastrophic humanitarian situation of internally displaced persons', 17 November 2025. <https://achpr.au.int/index.php/en/news/press-releases/17-11-2025/press-release-catastrophic-humanitarian-situation-internally>.

17 *Al Jazeera*, 'Tracking Sudan's humanitarian crisis: By the numbers', 15 December 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/15/12/2025/tracking-sudans-humanitarian-crisis-by-the-numbers>.

Aside from the United States, other major donors to Sudan and South Sudan have either already made cuts or signalled their intention to do so.¹⁸ During the latter half of 2024, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office announced substantial funding cuts, while the Swedish government closed its Cooperation Office in South Sudan. International organizations have responded by holding back funds in a bid to safeguard their survival, further squeezing national actors operating on the frontlines. Such moves further undermine the legitimacy of internationally led humanitarian and development models, making meaningful conversations about power distribution, decision making, sustainability and accountability ever more urgent.¹⁹ Here, the issue at stake is not whether the current direction of travel can be reversed, but rather how the transition is to be managed and the pace at which it will unfold.

Conversations and internationally led initiatives around renewing humanitarian action have already begun to take place. For instance, the Advisory Panel on Humanitarian Action—established in late 2025 by ODI Global and the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) to provide donors, governments and humanitarian organizations with strategic proposals and advice—recently produced a vision paper on the topic.²⁰ The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator's March 2025 initiative, meanwhile, called for a 'humanitarian reset' to tackle the crises besetting the sector.²¹ Despite being a top-down initiative, several of its goals involve prioritizing national organizations through direct funding, greater accountability and community engagement.

The November 2025 Kampala meeting therefore chimes with the aspirations of the various international actors looking to support national actors through the present transition. Above all, spaces must be created that allow national actors to make their voices heard in the debates shaping the emerging international humanitarian system.

GRASSROOTS RESPONSE MECHANISMS

What follows are stories of adaptable, effective grassroots humanitarian response mechanisms, long practiced by both Sudanese and South Sudanese communities. Such mechanisms draw on the African socio-cultural principle of '*ubuntu*', whereby interconnectedness, humanity and compassion are extended to community members during times of need. The Sudanese tradition of '*al-Nefir*', for instance, involves collectivized community service and voluntarism.²²

18 Oxfam, 'Aid cuts are driving South Sudan to breaking point', 26 November 2025. <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/despite-uk-promises-on-sudan-aid-cuts-are-driving-the-conflicts-fallout-in-south-sudan-to-breaking-point-oxfam/>.

19 M. H. Mohamed, 'Lack of accountability, not budget cuts, is the real humanitarian crisis', *Disasters* 4/49 (2025): e70005. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/disa.70005>.

20 Advisory Panel on the Future of Humanitarian Action, *From 'ego-systems' to 'ecosystems': renewing humanitarian action*, 7 November 2025. <https://odi.org/en/publications/from-ego-systems-to-ecosystems-renewing-humanitarian-action/>

21 UNOCHA, 'The Humanitarian Reset', 10 March 2025. <https://www.unocha.org/news/humanitarian-reset-10-march-2025>.

22 M. Sharfi, 'The Role of Nafeer and Social Networks in Sudan's Humanitarian Response and the Challenges for International Aid', *The Journal of Social Encounters* 9/1 (2025). https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1330&context=social_encounters.

As evidenced by the growing number of stories to make national and international news, these established mechanisms have been creatively deployed to build resilience.²³

Evidence shows that grassroots national organizations can deliver emergency assistance to their communities even when resources are limited. In both Sudan and South Sudan, support systems span the globe, with each country's points of need plugged into online financial and social media networks. Sudan's Emergency Response Rooms, for example, managed to mobilize thousands of volunteers while raising funds to feed, treat and shelter civilians affected by the war in Sudan, assisting people beyond the reach of international organizations.²⁴ Anecdotal evidence describes how messages shared between continents can, within a few days, ensure a welfare check or meal delivery to Sudan's remote areas and active war zones. In this way, the collaborative efforts of people around the world, combined with the bravery and ingenuity of those on the ground, have helped facilitate evacuations and saved lives.

In South Sudan, community groups and religious networks have successfully raised money, delivered food and medication, and facilitated peace initiatives where other mechanisms have failed. Additionally, diaspora-led community groups have raised funds for specific projects, such as drilling boreholes or repairing clinics and schools.²⁵

Among the South Sudanese people, there was outrage at the lack of support being extended to their counterparts caught up in the Sudan war. This prompted a national NGO coalition to launch the 'Citizens' Call' initiative, which sought cash and in-kind donations; coordinated with Sudanese and South Sudanese frontline responders to track-and-trace evacuees; and negotiated with the warring parties to ensure safe passage across and out of Sudan.²⁶ The coalition also engaged with international NGOs—including the Mission Aviation Fellowship, which provided air evacuations for the most vulnerable evacuees—and appealed to the South Sudanese government to provide protection and assistance to evacuees once they reached South Sudan.²⁷ The initiative led to the evacuation of 10,500 people in less than two months, as well as the provision of support for resettlement and/or family reunion.

23 See, e.g.: Hana Jafar, 'Madaniya* (civic politics): Women's Emergency Response Rooms as Flourishing Sites of Democracy in Wartime Sudan', *African Arguments*, 21 August 2025. <https://africanarguments.org/2025/08/madaniya-civic-politics-women-emergency-response-rooms-as-flourishing-sites-of-democracy-in-war-time-sudan/>; and Ari Daniel, 'This Nobel Peace Prize front-runner didn't win — but did get the "alternative Nobel"', *NPR*, 11 October 2025. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goats-and-soda/2025/10/11/g-s1-92906/nobel-peace-prize-nominee-sudan-emergency-response-rooms>.

24 Right Livelihood, 'Emergency Response Rooms', 2025. <https://rightlivelihood.org/the-change-makers/find-a-laureate/emergency-response-rooms/>.

25 DG ECHO, 'South Sudan: Facts & Figures'.

26 See Citizens' Call homepage: <https://www.citizenscall-erri.org>.

27 Muslim Aid South Africa (MAFSA), 'Operation Evacuation, Sudan', 21 July 2023. <https://www.mafsa.co.za/stories/operation-evacuation-sudan/>.

Such grassroots-driven mechanisms are part and parcel of the two countries' cultures and traditions, albeit adapted to new realities.²⁸ Through responding to communities' immediate needs, these flexible, often spontaneous initiatives provide tangible results. This is despite the many challenges those driving the initiatives face, particularly when forced to operate within complex humanitarian systems they had little or no part in creating. For example, many groups lack formal registration, which then makes it difficult for them to engage with the authorities and international actors. Thus, their efforts may be stymied, delegitimized or impeded on procedural or administrative grounds.

In light of their many decades of investment in international development and humanitarian assistance, traditional humanitarian aid actors and donors must also deal with questions of legacy. As such, withdrawal of assistance should be planned in collaboration with national grassroots and government actors; communicated clearly; and executed in a phased manner. Critically, in order to demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainability, localization and resilience, discussions should focus on reinforcing existing national initiatives. This can be done by supporting them more directly, with an emphasis on active engagement in planning, programme management, frontline delivery and accountability.

RISKS AND IMPLICATIONS

The dramatic contraction in development and humanitarian aid threatens the survival of tens of millions of people in Sudan and South Sudan, as well as neighbouring states hosting large refugee populations. More specifically, there is a very real possibility that crises of previously unseen scale and impact may emerge should the following risks go unaddressed:

- **Existing food insecurity and famine crises deepen.**²⁹
- **Deteriorating national health systems threaten global health security** by making it harder to control public health crises and epidemics.³⁰
- **Increased displacement and migration impact already overstretched systems**, placing pressure on host communities that lack the capacity to maintain or increase support. Regionally, such circumstances may expand the geographical spread of

28 L. Moro *et al.*, 'Localising humanitarian aid during armed conflict: Learning from the histories and creativity of South Sudanese NGOs', London School of Economics and Political Science, 2020, 2–4. <https://csf-sudan.org/library/localising-humanitarian-aid-during-armed-conflict-learning-from-the-histories-and-creativity-of-south-sudanese-ngos/>; Mazin Abdallah, 'The Role of Nafeer and Social Networks in Sudan's Humanitarian Response: Challenges for International Humanitarian Actors in Adapting to Local Mechanisms', Conflict Sensitivity Facility, 1 September 2025. <https://csf-sudan.org/the-role-of-nafeer-and-social-networks-in-sudans-humanitarian-response-challenges-for-international-humanitarian-actors-in-adapting-to-local-mechanisms/>.

29 Reuters, 'Some areas south of Sudan capital at risk of famine, says World Food Programme', 10 June 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/several-areas-south-sudan-capital-risk-famine-says-world-food-programme10-06-2025-/>; World Food Programme (WFP), 'Millions risk losing access to humanitarian food assistance amid funding slowdown in South Sudan', 22 July 2025. <https://www.wfp.org/news/millions-risk-losing-access-humanitarian-food-assistance-amid-funding-slowdown-south-sudan>.

30 L. N. Moro, 'ODA cuts and healthcare devastation in South Sudan', Institute of Development Studies (IDS), 7 April 2025. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/oda-cuts-and-healthcare-devastation-in-south-sudan>.

instability and insecurity, creating challenges to conflict management and mitigation mechanisms.³¹

- **Increased international migration, especially towards Europe, compounds domestic issues** that have already seen migration become a staple for political diversion and distraction, contributing to volatile, politically fragmented Western societies.
- **Desperate individuals and communities seek assistance from and/or provide human resources to armed groups.** This would potentially leave protection gaps, weaken institutions and erode social coping mechanisms, exposing more civilians to human rights abuses without any means of recourse.

Should the above risks come to pass, it will become ever harder to mitigate their humanitarian impacts. Faced with this, and regardless of the ongoing devastation that takes place, donor disengagement and eventual incapacitation may become the status quo.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the risks outlined above, it is imperative that the ongoing contraction in aid is not only acknowledged, but responsibly managed. Although further reductions in financial assistance are inevitable given the political, economic and security pressures facing most traditional donors, it is not a given that these changes will be experienced—or perceived—as the abandonment of long-held responsibilities to affected communities.

Urgent conversations, grounded in humanitarian values shaped over long years of hard work, are needed on how to manage the transition in a dignified manner. It is also critical that the gains made during past decades are not lost and, crucially, the opportunity to create a sustainable transformation is seized.

In view of the circumstances laid out in this policy brief, the Kampala meeting offers the following recommendations and next steps, most of which are also applicable beyond the context of the two Sudans.

Recommendations for national authorities

- **Ensure investment in public services**, including working with civil society organizations to establish and/or develop national and local-level services. In doing so, ensure policy coherence and equitable coverage.
- **Work with civil society on common goals**, using regular dialogue and participatory planning to build a safe, collaborative environment.

Next steps: Convene regular joint forums facilitating dialogue, planning and information-sharing between grassroots actors, civil society organizations and national authorities at all levels

31 Impact International, 'Millions at risk: South Sudan's food aid crisis amid funding shortfall', 22 July 2025. <https://impactpolicies.org/news/554/millions-at-risk-south-sudans-food-aid-crisis-amid-funding-shortfall>.

of government. The overriding aim would be to build effective public services, with national authorities assuming ownership, supported by—and in collaboration with—civil society actors.

Recommendations for international and regional actors

- **Shift power and resources closer to the point of delivery**, financing existing nationally led grassroots initiatives using available resources.
- **Avoid complete withdrawal**, especially when it comes to the provision of essential services. Invest in a managed transition from the old humanitarian system to a sustainable, nationally driven model.
- **Redefine partnerships in ways conducive to true localization**, including co-creation of, risk-sharing in, and mutual accountability for decision making, programme design and implementation. Such partnership must value the experience and knowledgebase of national actors, deferring to their leadership wherever possible.
- **Continue applying all available leverage to support political dialogue and engagement** between political actors in Sudan and South Sudan.

Next steps: Create a platform for national actors to discuss the transition period and how best to establish partnerships in support of a more sustainable, nationally led humanitarian system. Such a platform would help cement mutual accountability, ensuring decision-making transparency and ownership over outcomes.

ANNEX 1: THE KAMPALA RESOLUTION ON RETHINKING AID IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

Kampala, Uganda

4–5 November 2025

PREAMBLE

We, the undersigned representatives of civil society, community-based organizations, local and first responders, researchers, academics, women’s networks, private sector actors, and humanitarian practitioners from Sudan and South Sudan, gathered in Kampala from 4–5 November 2025 to reflect on the future of aid in our two countries.

Recognizing that the crises in Sudan and South Sudan are deeply interconnected—politically, socially, economically, culturally, and historically—and that our peoples’ destinies are bound together,

Acknowledging that the era of abundant foreign aid is ending and that the responsibility for sustaining our societies increasingly rests on our own shoulders,

Affirming that localization is not a donor policy but a moral, political, and practical imperative for reclaiming dignity and accountability, and that it is rooted in local communities, drawing on their indigenous knowledge, experience, and practices,

We issue this Resolution as a collective call to action for all actors—local, national, regional, and international—to reimagine aid as solidarity rather than charity, to centre local agency as the driving force of change, and to rebuild the social contract from the ground up.

1. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

These principles reflect our shared understanding that the aid system must be recentred around people and communities, rather than institutions or external agendas. To rethink aid is to reclaim agency, restore dignity, and rebuild solidarity through approaches grounded in our own realities and capacities.

1. Localization begins with us. True localization must centre local actors—communities, civil society, governments, and traditional institutions—in decision-making, resource management, and accountability. It is not about subcontracting but about power, people driven priorities, ownership, and shared responsibility.

2. Aid must complement—not define—local responses. Our communities have always survived through their own networks, social systems, and traditions of solidarity. External aid should align with and reinforce these systems, not replace them.

3. Dignity and inclusion are non-negotiable. Localization must be inclusive of women, youth, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups whose leadership sustains communities in crisis.

4. Accountability and transparency are mutual obligations. All actors—local, national, and international—must be accountable to the people we serve. Community-led monitoring, open reporting, and trust-based partnerships are the foundations of legitimacy.

5. Solidarity across borders. The people of Sudan and South Sudan share histories, cultures, and struggles. Our efforts to localize aid must strengthen—not divide—our collective resilience and cooperation across borders.

6. Peace is the foundation of people-centered development. Without peace and stability, efforts to deliver aid or strengthen local systems cannot endure or uphold human dignity. Governments, civil society, and the private sector must work together to ensure that peace delivers tangible benefits—including security, livelihoods, and well-being—for all.

2. A CALL TO ACTION

This Call to Action outlines the shared priorities and practical measures required to move from reflection to action in advancing locally led systems across Sudan and South Sudan.

For Local and National Actors

- **Define and lead the localization agenda.** Develop national and cross-border localization charters that articulate shared principles of inclusion, accountability, and solidarity.
- **Strengthen coordination and collective advocacy.** Build coalitions that pool resources, harmonize messages, and amplify a unified voice capable of influencing policy and donor behavior.
- **Document and share local innovations.** Capture and communicate homegrown solutions—from mutual aid to faith-based initiatives—to demonstrate what works and inspire replication.
- **Promote inclusion and equity.** Ensure that women, youth, and persons with disabilities are represented in leadership, decision-making, and resource allocation.
- **Speak up and claim space.** Assert your voices, knowledge, and locally grounded solutions by leading the change rather than waiting for others to create room.

For Governments and Public Authorities

- **Reinvest in public services.** Allocate national resources transparently to strengthen health, education, and social protection systems and reduce reliance on external aid.
- **Create an enabling environment for civic space and action.** Work with civil society and community structures through regular dialogue and participatory planning to ensure accountable governance.
- **Bridge policy and practice.** Integrate community-driven priorities into national and state development plans and institutional frameworks.

For International Partners and Donors

- **Invest in transition, not withdrawal.** Support sustainable systems that enable local actors to assume responsibility over time, ensuring continuity of essential services.
- **Shift power and resources closer to the ground.** Provide flexible, multi-year, and directly accessible funding to national and community-based organizations.
- **Provide trust-based funding.** Channel resources to local actors through partnerships that respect local leadership and avoid heavy administrative burdens, enabling faster action and strengthening mutual accountability.
- **Redefine partnership.** Move beyond subcontracting toward co-creation, risk-sharing, and mutual accountability in program design and delivery.
- **Harness community expertise.** Engage local actors as leaders and co-creators, recognizing their contextual knowledge, relationships, and lived experience as essential assets rather than viewing them as implementers.
- **Facilitate learning and solidarity.** Back cross-border exchanges, innovation hubs, and research collaborations that strengthen regional cooperation.

For the Private Sector

- **Invest in peace-positive economies.** Direct capital toward livelihoods, trade, and social enterprises that contribute to stability and shared prosperity.
- **Partner for resilience.** Collaborate with local cooperatives, women's enterprises, and community initiatives to create jobs, expand markets, and foster sustainable development.

For Regional and Multilateral Institutions

- **Champion solidarity across borders.** Support joint Sudan–South Sudan frameworks for humanitarian coordination, peacebuilding, and mutual learning.
- **Integrate localization into regional strategies.** Ensure that AU, IGAD, and other bodies embed local leadership, financing, and accountability within their policy frameworks.

3. COLLECTIVE NEXT STEPS

We agree to carry this agenda forward through continued collaboration, reflection, and action across borders.

We commit to translating the principles of this Resolution into practice by strengthening coordination between Sudanese and South Sudanese civil society, documenting and amplifying local innovations, and engaging constructively with governments, regional institutions, and international partners.

We affirm the importance of maintaining regular dialogue and joint advocacy to ensure that localization is defined and led from within, rooted in the lived realities and agency of communities themselves.

We pledge to sustain this movement beyond the workshop—to build networks of solidarity, promote mutual learning, and advance a shared vision of self-reliance, dignity, and peace for the peoples of Sudan and South Sudan.

*Adopted in Kampala, Uganda, on 5 November 2025
by participants in the Rethinking Aid in Sudan and South Sudan workshop*

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

1. Abyei Community Action for Development (ACAD)
2. Adeela for Art and Culture
3. Berlee for Peace & Development
4. CAPS Center
5. Church Leaders Initiative for Peace (CLIP)
6. Coalition for Humanity
7. Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF)
8. Detcro
9. Emergency Response Rooms – Central Darfur (ERRs)
10. Environment and Rural Women's Development Organization (ERD)
11. Eve Organization
12. Gender Equity and Women's Leadership Program
13. Hanadi AL-Mak (Researcher)
14. INTREPID South Sudan (ISS)
15. Juba Massacre of 1992 Widows and Orphans Association (JMWOA)
16. Khartoum Bahri ERR
17. New Vision for Sustainable Development (NVSD)
18. Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
19. Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
20. Peace Canal
21. Rift Valley Institute (RVI)
22. Safe Corridors and Friendly Homes for PWDs
23. South Sudan Women Coalition
24. South Women Union
25. The White Nile and Sudd Center
26. Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR)
27. Upper Nile Youth Development Association (UNYDA)
28. Western Equatoria State Civil Society Network
29. Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC)

ANNEX 2: SUMMARY

The brief draws on a joint convening held in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2025, which brought together more than 45 Sudanese and South Sudanese participants representing more than 30 grassroots organizations and international NGOs. Its primary objective is to amplify the perspectives of national civil society actors and ground policy recommendations in lived humanitarian realities. Both countries face intersecting human rights and humanitarian crises of unprecedented scale, marked by acute food insecurity, mass displacement and the erosion of basic services.

A central driver of this crisis has been the sharp contraction of international aid. In early 2025, a global ‘stop work’ order issued by the US government effectively ended decades of USAID-supported programming, with immediate and severe consequences in both Sudan and South Sudan. Frontline actors report rising starvation, preventable deaths, job losses and worsening mental health outcomes. Multilateral agencies, including UNHCR, WHO and UNICEF, have also been heavily affected. Only a small fraction of the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans for both countries has been funded, at a moment when Sudan’s conflict remains unresolved and South Sudan faces renewed risks of large-scale violence.

Despite these conditions, the brief highlights a significant but under-recognised source of resilience: the demonstrated capacity of grassroots and community-based humanitarian responses. Across both countries, local actors have mobilized socio-cultural support systems, diaspora networks and digital platforms to deliver food, shelter and medical assistance in contexts where international organizations could not operate. These initiatives reflect long-standing traditions of mutual aid, adapted to contemporary crises, and show clear potential to form the backbone of future humanitarian models if adequately supported rather than marginalized by international frameworks.

The current trajectory, however, carries profound risks. Continued aid contraction threatens to deepen famine conditions, accelerate the collapse of fragile health systems, increase displacement and outward migration, and exacerbate regional and global instability. Reduced humanitarian presence also heightens the risk of political fragmentation, armed group recruitment, protection gaps and widespread civilian abuses. As these pressures intensify, the human, political and financial cost of delayed or reactive responses will rise significantly.

The brief concludes that while reductions in international assistance may be unavoidable, abandonment is not. There is an urgent need to manage this transition responsibly, transparently and in partnership with national actors. Decades of humanitarian investment carry moral and practical obligations, including the duty to plan withdrawals collaboratively, communicate clearly and phase changes in ways that preserve dignity and hard-won gains. Frontline actors call for sustained dialogue among regional and international policymakers, grassroots organizations and national authorities to navigate this transition in line with shared values of localisation, sustainability and accountability. Failure to act proactively, the brief warns, will only defer and intensify the humanitarian crises that lie ahead.