

WE-RISE! Annual Meeting

Webinar Event – 10th December 2023

Opening speech by the EU Ambassador Aidan O'Hara

Today marks the International Human Rights Day, which also coincides with the culmination of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence" campaign. It serves as a poignant moment to reaffirm the collective commitment towards upholding human dignity. It is a reminder of the imperative to promote and protect human rights, with the specific focus on addressing the issue of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Just days ago, young Sudanese participated in a creative contest to raise awareness on GBV in the framework of WE-RISE. Their sincere engagement in the poster competition stands as a testament to combat GBV. Their submissions not only displayed the artistic talent, but also conveyed powerful messages advocating for awareness, empathy and action against GBV.

The violent conflict in Sudan, which began in April 2023, has hauled the nation into political upheaval, economic woes, and a dire humanitarian crisis affecting millions of lives. We receive grim and disturbing news about widespread SGBV cases especially in the combat zones, affecting in particular women and girls. The number of people in need of gender-based violence services in Sudan have increased by over 1 million to 4.2 million people. This number is expected to further increase to 6.9 million in 2024.

As a response, and thanks to the great dedication of our implementing partners - AICS and UN Women with their partners on the ground - the project managed to re-adapt to the changing situation, including strengthening our response to GBV through community-based initiatives in Eastern Sudan.

In addition, one cannot forget the fast mobilisation by the project to urgently provide seeds, equipment, and other vital tools to over 390 women in Gadaref in response to the dire food security crisis, last July.

It is thanks to our partners AICS and UN Women, as well as Mercy Corps, Jasmara, Child Development Fund and Microfinanza tirelessly working on the ground, that the EU has managed to support Sudanese women, girls, men and boys, during these very challenging times.

I sincerely appreciate your commitment to the people in Sudan, regardless of their sex, age, ethnicity or migratory status.

Women's empowerment is a key element to achieve the ambitious objective of gender equality because women hold the important role of educating the children and contribute to food security & livelihood of the household and the community through their – often unrecognised – contribution to the agriculture sector.

Through the funding of various programmes, the EU in Sudan will continue to ensure that gender equality remains a cornerstone of its development and humanitarian response in crisis settings. We will continue actively supporting and engaging with international partners and civil society organisations seeking to dismantle systemic barriers and foster a more inclusive, safer environment for all, particularly those impacted by crises.