



WE-RISE! 2nd ANNUAL MEETING 2023
Women Empowerment for Resilience,
Inclusion, Sustainability and Environment

Press Release

WE-RISE! Project Marks Its Third Year: A Commitment to Women's Empowerment Amid Sudan's Challenges

Khartoum, December 10th, 2023, – The **Ambassador of Italy to Sudan, Michele Tommasi**, along with **EU Ambassador H.E. Aidan O'Hara** and **UN Women Representative Adjaratou Fataou Ndiaye**, commemorate the third year of the WE-RISE! Program, worth of 12.7 million euros. Funded by the European Union and implemented by the Italian Agency for Development and by UN Women, with the support from the international NGO, Mercy Corps, this II annual meeting underscores the project's resilience, inclusivity, and dedication to sustainable development, expressed **Michele Morana, Head of the AICS Khartoum Regional Office**.

"Despite the challenges posed by the conflict last April 15th, 2023, Italy's commitment to Sudan remains unwavering", affirmed Ambassador Tommasi. He emphasized that these initiatives are vital in fostering stability and driving crucial social and economic development for Sudan's future, extending beyond the project itself. "It's a promise to stand by Sudan during these trying times. Italy actively engages in reinforcing strategic projects that empower women as architects of peace, recognizing their significance that transcends borders and ideologies", concluded Tommasi.

The conflict has led to the displacement of over six million people, including an estimated 105,000 pregnant women, according to the United Nations. Nearly 90% of those seeking refuge in neighboring countries are women and children. Sudan's healthcare system faces severe challenges, with 70 to 80% of hospitals in conflict zones non-operational, impacting access to maternal healthcare significantly.

"The violent conflict in Sudan, which began in April 2023, has dragged the nation into political upheaval, economic hardship and a dire humanitarian crisis affecting millions of lives. We are receiving grim and disturbing reports of widespread cases of SGBV especially in combat zones, particularly affecting women and girls. The number of people in need of gender-based violence services in Sudan has increased by more than 1 million to 4.2 million people. This number is expected to further increase to 6.9 million in 2024. In response, and thanks to the great dedication of our implementing partners - AICS and UN Women with their partners on the ground - the project has been able to adapt to the evolving situation, while also strengthening our emergency response through community-based initiatives in eastern Sudan." - said the European Union Ambassador to Sudan - Aidan O'Hara, in his opening remarks.

Amid these adversities, the WE-RISE! program serves as a beacon, addressing global challenges, particularly those affecting women amid Sudan's conflict. The commitment to women's empowerment and resilience remains steadfast, acknowledging their pivotal role in shaping Sudan's future.

Initiatives in Kassala, Gedaref, and the Red Sea states aim to empower women through microfinance, leadership development, and cultural change, highlighted Costanza Matafu, the WE-RISE! program's Team Leader. UN Women affirmed that the project emphasizes the indispensable role of women in conflict resolution and the pursuit of enduring peace.

The WE-RISE! Initiative acknowledges women as catalysts for lasting peace and stability. Italy reaffirms its commitment to reinforcing initiatives that empower women—a crucial aspect of Sudan's journey toward sustainable development and stability. Together, these efforts wield the power to transform lives and forge a brighter future for Sudan.

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