



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

## Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by the Sudan under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2015\*

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



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## Introduction

1. The Sudan, which is located in the north-eastern part of Central Africa, has an area of 1,865,813 km<sup>2</sup>. It lies between the latitudes of 8.45° and 23.8° north of the equator and between longitudes 22° and 38° east of the Greenwich meridian. The Red Sea separates the country from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Due to its vast geographical extent, with many tribes and local dialects, the Sudan has adopted a federal system of governance. The country is made up of 18 states divided into 133 districts which are further subdivided into administrative units. Under the 2005 Interim Constitution, each state of the Sudan has legislative powers.

### Map of the Sudan



2. Since submitting its third and fourth periodic report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/SDN/3-4) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2007, and since the interactive dialogue between the Committee and a Sudanese delegation in October 2010, the Sudan has made continuous efforts to address child-related issues in various fields. To this end, it has pursued cooperation and coordination between official institutions, civil society organizations and international partners. In addition, numerous legislative developments took place between 2010 and 2016 with a view to strengthening and functionalizing child-related legal frameworks. A number of protection measures were also rolled out for the provision of services to children in humanitarian and emergency situations, as well as comprehensive child-protection mechanisms at the national and state levels.

3. These efforts were accompanied by challenges in the form of armed conflicts in certain border areas, which affected the continuity and quality of services for children. That situation was further exacerbated by economic changes, most notably – following the secession of South Sudan in July 2011 – the loss of oil revenues, which had represented more than 50 per cent of all national exports. This situation led to a structural reprogramming of the economy and a redoubling of efforts to close the gap left by former oil revenues. Efforts in this regard led to the discovery of gold and the start of extraction operations.

4. Another major challenge has been the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries, especially from South Sudan. Around 70 per cent of all the refugees are children and women, meaning that great efforts had to be made to provide services and programmes for their care and protection.

5. At the same time, the ongoing unilateral economic sanctions against Sudan, which have been in place since 1997, have directly and indirectly affected the health, education and social services provided to communities, families and children. Nonetheless, Sudan has managed to tangibly improve those services, as a number of pertinent surveys and studies have shown.

#### **Structure and methodology of the report**

6. The present report, which charts the progress that has been made in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, is consistent with the guidelines adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the form and content of periodic reports. It describes the relevant measures and actions taken between 2010 to 2015, in the light of the concluding observations on the third and fourth periodic report of the Sudan, implicitly addressing the action taken to give effect to those observations, which are addressed in separate sections of this report.

7. The present report is chiefly drawn from official documents and reports compiled by governmental institutions, as well as from national surveys and studies, and from statistics relevant to the information requested in the Committee's reporting guidelines.

8. In order to involve all stakeholders in the drafting process, the secretariat of the National Council for Child Welfare formed a technical committee headed by the secretary-general and with members drawn from other secretariats of the Council as well as from government institutions, national and international organizations and a number of research centres.<sup>1</sup> The technical committee held three meetings to discuss how to draft the report, agree a methodology, supervise the drafting procedures and make observations and comments on the various drafts of the report.

9. Since children are the direct stakeholders and the main protagonists of the Convention, a workshop was organized at which children of various categories were able to discuss the issues that affect them and express their own views and opinions, which were duly reflected in the report. After this, a consultative meeting was held with representatives from the country's 18 states, who discussed the draft report and made their own comments and observations to that the text might reflect the situation at the state level.

10. In addition, a workshop was held at which the draft report was submitted to 24 voluntary organizations that work with children, and to research centres affiliated with certain institutions of higher education, who also discussed and commented on the contents of the text. All their views were then integrated into the final definitive version of the report.

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<sup>1</sup> The membership of the committee included 19 governmental institutions, 4 national organizations, 3 international organizations working in the field of childhood, and 2 research centres affiliated with institutions of higher education.

## 1. General measures of implementation

### 1.1 Reservations and declarations

**The Sudan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols with no reservations.**

### 1.2 Steps taken to review national legislation and local practices

11. In addition to the 2010 Children's Act and the laws mentioned in the third and fourth periodic report of the Sudan, several other laws have had a direct or indirect bearing on the legal framework that promotes the rights of children in various fields, including, for example:

- The Armed Forces Act of 2007, as amended in 2014
- The Cybercrime Act of 2007, as amended in 2016 with the addition of a section on children
- The Public Health Act of 2008
- The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2009
- The Civil Registry Act of 2011
- The Asylum Regulation Act of 2014
- The Trafficking in Persons Act of 2014

12. A number of states have children's laws in their own right,<sup>2</sup> while in four states there are laws or provisions within laws that criminalize the practice of female genital mutilation. Those states are South Kordofan, South Darfur, Red Sea and Gedaref.

13. Between 2010 and 2015, the Government of the Sudan strove to enhance its legal framework via the enactment of the Children's Act of 2010, strengthening of child protection mechanisms, building capacity among the personnel of those mechanisms and rolling out a criminal justice programme for juveniles.

14. Special courts and prosecution offices for juveniles have been established as well as departments for the protection of families and children in all the states of the Sudan. Moreover, the Chief Justice issued a judicial order to the effect that, in the absence of a specific juvenile court judge, the chief justice in each state is to be responsible for cases involving children. A number of courtrooms have been fitted with closed-circuit television to ensure confidentiality and privacy for children, and a department has been set up as part of the Supreme Court to review rulings handed down against children. Furthermore, action has been taken to deliver services to children in conflict areas and during emergency situations. In this regard, the Sudan was one of the first countries in Africa to adopt minimum standards for the protection of children in emergency situations and crises, something it did in 2015.

15. Three sets of interpretative regulations concerning the Children's Act of 2010 have been endorsed. They concern social surveillance, dealing with child victims and kindergartens. A further seven sets of regulations have been drafted and are awaiting endorsement. They concern referrals outside the justice system, child labour, work in educational institutions, student behaviour in primary schools, community service for child offenders, punishments that are prohibited in schools and breastfeeding. The regulations were discussed and drafted during meetings and workshops that involved juvenile court judges, police officers, prosecutors, state-level children's councils and competent ministries who sought to identify challenges to the implementation of the Act at the state and federal levels.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Constitution of the Sudan, matters relating to childhood and motherhood are shared between the central authority and the states.

16. Consultations have been held with the Supreme Court concerning the enforcement of the 2010 Children's Act and its implementing regulations. The consultations also addressed the experience of Supreme Court judges in the circuit of the central states (Al-Gazira, Blue Nile and White Nile), the eastern Sudan circuit (Red Sea, Kassala and Gedaref), the Kordofan circuit (West Kordofan, North Kordofan and South Kordofan), the Darfur circuit (West Darfur, North Darfur, South Darfur, Central Darfur and East Darfur) and the circuit of Khartoum and the Northern state. The outcome of the consultations was used when drafting the regulations of the 2010 Children's Act.

17. The Sudan has made continuous efforts to establish and reinforce departments for the protection of families and children in all states and districts of the country. At the same time, staff in those departments, police officers, and social workers have been given thorough training on various aspects of child protection.

18. The National Council for Child Welfare works with the judicial authorities to establish mechanisms in communities at the grass-roots level for the application of the concept of restorative criminal justice for children. To that end, it encourages community participation in issues affecting children and facilitates the application of the implementing regulations of the Children's Act. These envisage a body of non-custodial and rehabilitative measures for child offenders, the application of a social probation by-law and – thanks to the non-custodial alternatives and the exalted status of the child – the reduction of instances in which children are held in detention or have their freedom restricted. In 2015, the proportion of cases referred to social probation instead of placement in educational institutions ranged between 65 per cent and 89 per cent. At the same time, sentences under which children were placed in social probation ranged from 6 months to 12 months. This was part of a pilot project in three courts in the state of Khartoum.<sup>3</sup>

19. Ever since 2012, efforts have been and continue to be made to ensure that children's rights are duly guaranteed in the forthcoming Constitution of the Sudan. In cooperation with government partners and civil society organizations, the National Council for Child Welfare drafted a document on children's rights. This paper has been discussed and submitted to various sectors of society such as media workers, the Federation of Secondary School Students, governmental bodies, the Political Parties Council and a number of committees of the National Assembly.

20. A conference on the reform of the Constitution, organized in 2014 by the University of Khartoum and other bodies, highlighted the need for the next Constitution to include human rights and children's rights, in line with international treaties, chief among them the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

### 1.3 National strategies and action plans

21. A strategy was rolled out for the period 2014–2016 to improve systems for civil registration and vital statistics. It focused on birth registration and was part of a civil registration project that sought to protect the right of children to be registered immediately after birth.

22. The final draft of a strategy to end child marriage was completed in 2015. The strategy was developed following a knowledge, attitudes and practices study on marriages involving children under the age of 18, which took place in 2012 and 2013 in six states (West Darfur, Central Darfur, Gedaref, Khartoum, South Darfur and East Darfur). The study was conducted after the results of the 2010 SHHS<sup>4</sup> pointed to an increase in the marriage of children under 18 (37.6 per cent at the national level).

<sup>3</sup> Reports of the secretariat for institutional protection of the National Council for Child Welfare, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Sudan Household Health Survey 2010.

23. The national policy for the care and protection of children deprived of parental care 2011 aims to provide care for children in a family setting. The policy incorporates a number of components, including foster care, awareness-raising, and legislative support for such children.
24. The national vaccination policy, which was updated in 2012, aims to protect children from diseases that can be prevented by inoculation. The policy was developed under a broader international immunization framework that aims to promote immunization as a human right.
25. The 2008 national strategy for the reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, which was adopted by the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, seeks to establish a framework for reintegration activities in the Sudan, in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles).
26. A number of ministries, the General Directorate for Prisons and Reform and Save the Children Sweden are working on a national policy to address the situation of children who accompany their mothers in prison. Agreement has been reached on indicators and areas of focus for the policy.
27. The National Council for Child Welfare adopted a five-year plan for childhood 2012–2016. The plan supplements the childhood-related sectoral plans of governmental institutions as well as the projects and activities related to childhood envisaged in cooperation agreements signed between the Council and donors.
28. The Sudan national nutrition strategy 2008 and policies associated therewith were developed by the Federal Ministry of Health. They aim to improve nutritional support for children by providing standardized high-quality health services. This is backed up with technical capacity-building for personnel to give them the skills they need to implement and monitor nutrition-related activities.
29. The national family strategy 2008, which is in the process of being renewed, was adopted by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security in partnership with federal and state ministries, civil society organizations and the National Committee for the Family.
30. The national orphan sponsorship policy 2009, which is also in the process of being renewed, was likewise adopted by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security. Its principal aim is to support orphans and mobilize the community, and its priorities include the implementation of decrees and directives for the support of orphans and the provision of health insurance for families who sponsor orphans.
31. The national begging and vagrancy policy 2009, which is in the process of being updated, seeks to reduce – and eventually eliminate – the phenomenon of begging, raise awareness about the issue among families and society at large and coordinate oversight at the federal and state levels.
32. The second five-year plan for education 2012–2016, included the goal of education for all, which has been part of successive five-year plans for education since 2002.
33. Strategies for high-quality education include a strategy for education in nomadic communities 2012–2016, a strategy for special education (children with disabilities) 2012–2016 and a strategy for out-of-school education 2009–2016.
34. An education development strategy for Darfur 2012–2015.
35. A strategy and plan for the reform of secondary education policy 2012–2015–2021.
36. A draft strategy for early childhood has been completed.

#### **1.4 Coordination and follow-up**

37. The Government of Sudan has sought to build stronger and closer coordination between the capital and the states on issues affecting children, and it has worked to support the capacities of child welfare councils in the states through regular meetings to discuss and



coordinate operational priorities and organize activities and training courses regarding children's issues at the state level. The National Council for Child Welfare has established strong new partnerships and effectively consolidated existing ones as a way of advancing cooperation and coordination with its strategic partners from government institutions and national, regional and international organizations. In that regard, it has signed plans and agreements with international and regional organizations that work to support children in the Sudan, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Save the Children Sweden and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). At the national level, the groups involved include the Journalists for Children Association, the Sabah Association for the Welfare and Development of Children, the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the Mada Centre for Community Research, the Woman's Research Centre and the Centre for the Development of Adolescents. The international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) include Hope and Homes for Children and Plan International Sudan. In addition, meetings on children's issues have been held with embassies and diplomatic missions in the Sudan, including those from the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands, although these contacts have not yet developed into partnerships.

38. There are child welfare councils in all 18 states of the Sudan, which are presided over by the State Governor and which deal with all issues affecting children at the state level, in coordination with the National Council for Child Welfare and state-level partners.

39. Some states have multisectoral coordination committees, which were established to address specific issues at the national and state levels. The committees, which are mandated to work in the field of child protection, include representatives from government and civil society bodies and interact on a regular basis with child protection organizations.

40. Certain states have a mechanism regulating police departments for the protection of families and children. The mechanism brings together all the stakeholders in the field of juvenile justice, UNICEF and three civil society organizations active in that field.

41. The National Council for Child Welfare, the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior (departments for the protection of families and children), juvenile court judges, child prosecutors and UNICEF have all worked in partnership to produce a standardized training manual on the application of non-custodial measures. The manual, which was completed in July 2016, is intended for persons working in organs of the judiciary that deal with children.

42. The National Council for Child Welfare is cooperating with the Organization of Sudanese Women Parliamentarians to run a series of workshops on legislation to prevent female genital mutilation. The workshops, which are aimed at 110 parliamentarians sitting on various committees of the National Assembly (parliament), focus on a number of issues, including health, cultural and religious dimensions and legislative frameworks.

43. Thanks to coordination and partnership between the National Council for Child Welfare, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and UNICEF, a study was conducted in 2015 that monitored and evaluated child protection in the Sudan, focusing particularly on the social welfare system.<sup>5</sup> The study showed that national initiatives such as the Child-Friendly Communities Initiative have managed to create links between child protection structures. The Child-Friendly Communities Initiative – which was launched by the Ministry of Finance (planning department) in 2002 with support from UNICEF – coordinates between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Welfare and other bodies within a specific geographical area, to build community capacity (about 800 communities in 12 states) in order to protect children, help them to survive and promote their development and participation. It also focuses on preschool and primary education, supplying students with textbooks and school uniforms, which are distributed via the Ministry of Education. The target families and children are identified by social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs; the families are then contacted and made aware of how they can access benefits under the Initiative. The Initiative also envisages clean water and

<sup>5</sup> Mapping/Assessment of Child Protection System in Sudan (focus on Social Welfare System), MoWSS, NCCW, UNICEF.2015.

sanitation for children, at school and at home. An evaluation carried out in 2014 by an independent expert commissioned by UNICEF<sup>6</sup> indicates that the Initiative achieved its goals, notably that of maintaining and building partnerships and empowering communities. In the light of the fact that the Communities Initiative has outstanding databases, well-qualified staff and proven methodologies, the Government is currently in the process<sup>7</sup> of using it as a mechanism for advancing integrated rural development. Partnerships are in the process of being developed between the Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – particularly as regards governance and peace – and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). On a separate front, the Child-Friendly Communities Initiative has also shown itself to be effective in humanitarian work, and it has been involved with humanitarian organizations in coordinating and delivering humanitarian assistance. In fact, it has communication mechanisms that operate at all levels: the Office of Federal Governance acts as a focal point, while at the state level it has units in the Ministry of Finance (planning department) as well as units at the district level and development committees at the community level.

44. The study mentioned in the previous paragraph showed that government bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health coordinate and cooperate in various ways to raise awareness and conduct medical evaluations. Coordination mechanisms operate in states such as Blue Nile and the states of Darfur; in general, however, coordination and cooperation in certain states is insufficient.

45. Stakeholders need to further coordinate and integrate their efforts, within a framework of strong and continuous commitment to children, if they are to reach agreed goals vis-à-vis the care, development and protection of the child. This is to be achieved by building on the successes of past years while allocating more resources to child-oriented programmes and projects. Another important thing is to collect documented and disaggregated data in order to identify children's real needs.

## 1.5 The governmental coordinating body on children and their rights

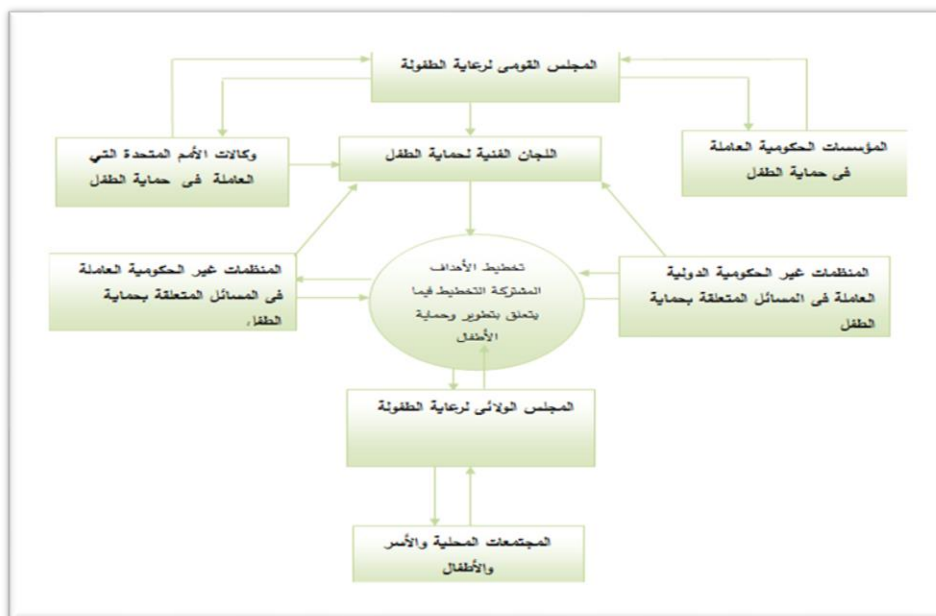
46. The National Council for Child Welfare is the national mechanism responsible for planning and coordinating all childhood-related action in the Sudan and for overseeing the implementation of relevant international and regional treaties that the Sudan has ratified, first among them the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its aim is to secure children's right to survival, protection, care and development, in coordination with government institutions, civil society groups and international organizations that work with children. The Act regulating the National Council for Child Welfare, which was issued in 2008, abrogated the preceding Act of 199. Such abrogation was an institutional requirement to upgrade the operation of the Council and align it with advances in the various child-related fields it deals with. The nature of the Council's work, in essence, is that it takes an integrated approach to children's issues, which are intertwined with the work of several ministries and government institutions that provide area-specific services for children, such as health, education, etc.

47. The Council's work is based on an operational methodology that envisages an interconnected system of children's rights, which the State is committed to achieving and which are reflected in the goals enshrined in the international and regional children's rights instruments that the Sudan has ratified. Figure 1 below shows how relationships on childhood-related issues are coordinated under the leadership of the National Council for Child Welfare.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, Child-Friendly Communities Initiative, Evaluation Report, Sudan, Emily Coinco, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Report of the Office of Federal Governance, 2016.

Figure 1.

**Coordination of relationships on childhood-related issues****1.6 The role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child**

48. The Act regulating the National Human Rights Commission was issued in 2009, in accordance with article 142 of the Constitution, while the decree for the formation of the Commission dates from 2012. The Commission is made up of 15 members and is fully independent in its decisions on any matter related to human rights.

49. The Commission oversees the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and receives complaints about alleged violations. It also has a specialized subcommittee on children that deals with issues arising from any violations of children's rights.

50. An operational methodology was devised under which the Commission rolled out its first strategic plan for the years 2014–2018. This consists of a study and analysis of its own capacities through self-assessment, interviews and dialogue, as well as an exploration of the capabilities of its members and the plans and programmes of its subcommittees, an analysis of legislation and a review of its own organizational structure.

51. The Commission has been granted observer status on the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights and on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and it has gained membership of both the African and the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions.

**1.7 Budget allocations for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols**

52. According to a report of the Central Bank of Sudan – the Economic and Financial Review of 2015 – the rate of growth of gross domestic product (GDP) decreased from 4.4 per cent in 2013 to 3.6 per cent in 2014. Inflation also went down from 13.6 per cent at the end of September 2015 to 12.6 per cent at the end of December 2015.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to determine the budgets allocated for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols in the form of systematic and verifiable data that can be compared with data on other budgets. This is because the budget is divided across different sectors such as health, education, social

<sup>8</sup> Economic and Financial Review for October–December 2015, Central Bank of Sudan.

welfare, etc., while the states have their own budgets which are separate from the national budget, and some states receive support from the central Government. Budget allocations for a number of ministries are shown in table 1.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1  
**Budget allocations for certain ministries**

<i>Summary from 2011 to 2014</i>							
<i>Sector</i>	<i>Health</i>		<i>Education</i>		<i>Social welfare</i>		<i>Total national budget</i>
<i>Year</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>%</i>	
2011	469 470 000	3.4654	449 110 000	3.3151	145 420 000	1.0734	13 547 300 000
2012	503 780 000	2.4309	492 010 000	2.3741	167 850 000	0.8099	20 723 700 000
2013	555 700 000	2.2125	553 000 000	2.2017	145 000 000	0.5773	25 116 700 000
2014	688 834 334	1.9054	958 171 911	2.6504	981 282 909	2.7143	36 151 818 450

53. According to the above-mentioned 2015 study to monitor and evaluate child protection in the Sudan with a particular focus on the social welfare system, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provides direct support to 750,000 poor families in the country, while the Zakat Office is the principal funder of direct support for children and poor families. The Office supports foster families, helps orphans to continue their studies and provides funds for health insurance and microfinance under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security.

54. The same study also shows that the largest part of the budgets of childcare institutions is disbursed by the Government, in order to meet the high cost of operating those institutions. In Khartoum, 80 per cent of the budget outlay of the Mygoma Home for children deprived of parental care comes from the Government and 20 per cent from NGOs and charitable donors. The Mygoma Home accommodates around 350 infants and children under 4 years of age who are separated from their families.

55. In addition to this, the salaries of social workers seconded from the Ministry of Social Welfare to NGOs and institutions are fully paid by the Government. The Government also funds the budget and meets the operating costs of the field service unit,<sup>10</sup> which seeks to support children in street situations.

56. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy contributes between 10 and 12 per cent to the local budget in some states in eastern Sudan. It also provides up to 50 per cent of the budget for joint programmes with donors such as UNICEF and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities to fund plans on child-related issues.

57. In 2016, the National Council for Child Welfare – in cooperation with Save the Children Sweden and the Journalists for Children Association – took actions to promote child-friendly budgeting by providing government agencies with training on that subject and monitoring real spending on children's issues.

<sup>9</sup> Annual budgets approved by the National Assembly 2011–2014.

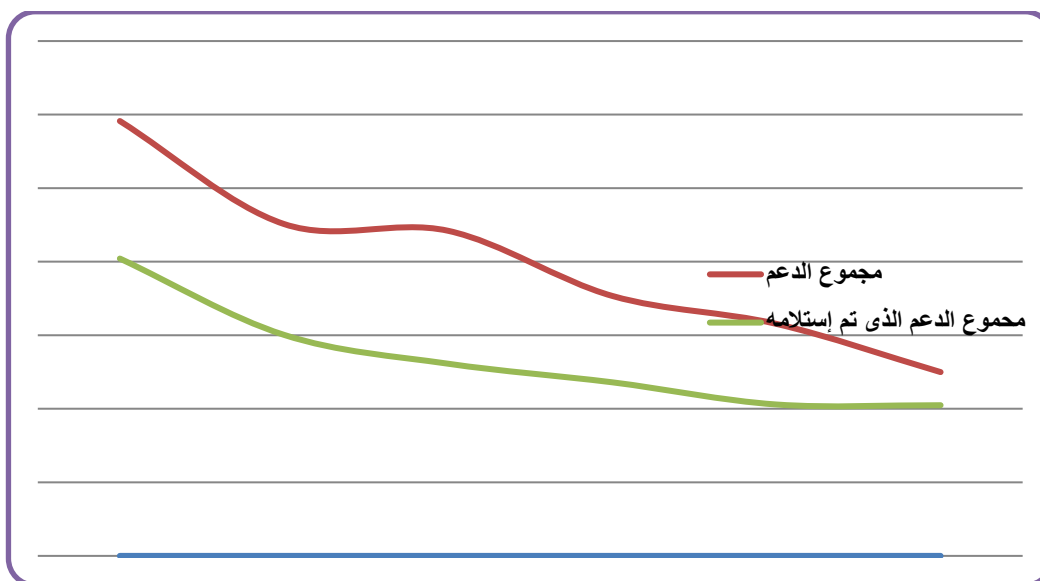
<sup>10</sup> This is a unit under the Ministry of Social Development that is staffed by social workers who deal with children who live and work on the street in all districts of the state of Khartoum.

## 1.8 International assistance and development aid

Figure 2

### Official international development assistance to the Sudan from 2010 to 2015

in United States dollars



Source: Ministry for International Cooperation, 2015.

## 1.9 Measures to disseminate the Convention and its Optional Protocols, the periodic reports and the concluding observations as widely as possible

58. The National Council for Child Welfare had the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the third and fourth periodic report of the Sudan printed in booklet form. The booklet shows the Committee's observations followed by its recommendations, the measures to be taken in that regard and the authorities responsible for taking them. The booklet and the periodic report have been published on the National Council's website ([www.nccw.Gov.sd](http://www.nccw.Gov.sd)).

59. Between 2011 and 2015, action was taken to publicize and disseminate the Committee's concluding observations at the national and the state levels. Meetings and workshops were held with all stakeholders who work with children, in coordination with the child welfare councils in the states and with support from Save the Children Sweden. Also, a focal point was designated to ensure that government agencies take due account of the issues raised in the concluding observations when drawing up their annual plans.

## 1.10 Cooperation with civil society organizations, NGOs and youth and children's groups

60. Five voluntary organizations that work in the field of child welfare enjoy full membership of the National Council for Child Welfare.

61. The National Council for Child Welfare hosts the Journalists for Children Association in its building and gives it the services it needs to pursue its daily activities. The Association is a voluntary, social, humanitarian, non-profit body that does advocacy work on child protection. The National Council for Child Welfare also has robust partnerships with civil society organizations, which participate in the activities on child-related matters organized by the Council and its subcommittees.

**Participation of civil society organizations in the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Sudan**

- The National Council for Child Welfare organized a consultative workshop on the draft of the present report with 24 voluntary organizations that work with children as well as with a number of research centres affiliated with institutions of higher education.
- Several of the participants in the workshop pointed to the progress that had been made in the area of childhood. They also drew attention to the fact that the number of children who had benefited from the State budget allocation for social support was unknown and that the report needed to reflect the change in budgeting in favour of children.
- Some participants stated that the involvement of children needed to be rendered effective through children's parliaments at the national level. Children also needed to be trained and given greater opportunity to participate in the report. The participants pointed out that the involvement of civil society organizations needed to be regular and continuous and that reports needed to include references to the activities of children's organizations. The activity of such organizations was not sufficiently clear in the present report.
- The participants indicated that the report needed to include more, and more up-to-date statistics and to focus on final outcomes, such as the number of malnourished children, the number of deaths due to malnutrition and the situation of children without support which is intensifying significantly. The report should also focus on the need to enact a special law to protect the rights of adopted children. In addition, participants highlighted the situation of nomadic children, who suffered due to a lack of services. The report also needed to address the activities organized for such children.
- Participants discussed the need for more training for school social workers. They also addressed the subject of children with disabilities, the absence of services for such children and the nature of a curriculum that could accommodate them, pointing out that many children in that category remain at home with no access to social support. Participants also drew attention to the importance of setting up kindergartens inside prisons for the children of female prisoners, and they discussed the unilateral economic sanctions and their negative impact on children and on the implementation of the Convention.
- Some participants enjoined the enforcement of laws on violence against women and children, pointing to the situation of children in certain groups who are exposed to violence, and stating that a mechanism should be put in place to protect them.

## 2. Definition of the child (art. 1)

62. Children under the age of 18 account for 48.5 per cent of a total population of 30,894,000. Children under the age of 5 account for 14.7 per cent, females for 49.4 per cent and children in rural and nomadic communities for 66.8 per cent, according to the 2008 census. The proportion of young persons under the age of 25 is 62 per cent, with a growth rate of 2.5 per cent. Table 2 shows the population of the Sudan in 2008 before the creation of the two new states in Darfur in 2011 (Central Darfur and East Darfur) which brought the total number of states in Darfur to five. A subsequent referendum among the population of Darfur in April 2016 confirmed that Darfur should be five states and not one.

Table 2  
Population of the Sudan in 2008<sup>11</sup>

<i>State</i>	<i>Under 5 (%)</i>	<i>Under 18 (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Northern	11.5	41.4	50.6	49.4	699 065
River Nile	13	42.4	51	49	1 120 441
Red Sea	11.1	43.9	57.1	42.9	1 396 110
Kassala	47.1	52.9	55.2	44.8	1 789 806
Gedaref	17.1	52.9	49.6	50.4	1 348 378
Khartoum	12.4	40.2	53	47	5 247 321
Al-Gazira	12.4	47.1	48.2	51.8	3 575 280
White Nile	15.5	49.2	49	51	1 730 588
Sennar	48.9	50.1	48.7	51.3	1 285 058
Blue Nile	18.8	53.2	50.6	49.4	832 112
North Kordofan	16.9	51.9	48.1	51.9	2 920 992
South Kordofan	18.5	54.3	49.3	50.7	1 406 404
North Darfur	14.9	51.8	51	49	2 113 626
Central Darfur	16.9	54.6	48.6	51.4	1 308 225
South Darfur	15.3	54	52.3	47.7	4 093 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>30 894 000</b>

63. Data from a 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey undertaken by the Central Bureau of Statistics, which is under the Council of Ministers, indicated that 50.6 per cent of the population is estimated to be under the age of 18 and 15.2 per cent to be under the age of 5.

64. The data shows, then, that around half the population are children. In addition, more than half of the population lives in rural or nomadic communities. In this way, the population pyramid of the Sudan presents a challenge for the provision of services to children.

65. Article 4 of the Children's Act of 2010 states that a child is any person under the age of 18. The Act also fixes the age of criminal responsibility at 12. For its part, the Elections Act of 2008 specifies that the voting age is 18 years and above.<sup>12</sup> According to the statutes of the Directorate General for Civil Registry, all Sudanese citizens have the right to obtain independent travel documents (a passport and a certificate of nationality), regardless of their age. Table 3 shows how legal age limits for children have changed following the enactment of the Children's Act in 2010, as compared to other laws.

<sup>11</sup> When the census was conducted in 2008, Sudan consisted of 15 states.

<sup>12</sup> The Elections Act of 2008.

Table 3  
**Legal age of the child under the 2010 Children’s Act as compared with other pieces of legislation**

<i>Description</i>	<i>Legal age under the 2010 Children’s Act</i>	<i>Other legislation</i>	<i>Age (in years)</i>
Age of majority	18	Criminal Code 1991	18 or 15 if signs of puberty appear
Age of marriage	Not mentioned	Personal Status Act 1991	10 with the authorization of a judge who determines best interests
National service	18	Armed Forces Act 2007	18
Working age	14, although persons under that age can work in pastoral and agricultural activities	Labour Code 2007	16
Criminal responsibility	12	Criminal Code 1991	7

66. The table shows that the Criminal Code and the 2010 Children’s Act differ in their definition of a child. However, this discrepancy is resolved under article 6 (3) and (4) of the 1974 Act regulating the Interpretation of Laws and Public Texts Act, which reads: “(3) The provisions of a later law shall have precedence over an earlier law to the extent that they eliminate any conflict between the two. (4) Any special law or special provision on any subject contained in any law shall be considered an exception to any other law regulating that subject.”

67. The Children’s Act incorporates the standards enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which acquired constitutional force under article 27 (3) of the 2005 Interim Constitution of the Sudan. According to that article, all rights are an integral part of the “Bill of Rights”, which is itself part of the Constitution. Moreover, the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution are inviolable and are under the oversight of the Constitutional Court and the National Human Rights Commission.

68. The definition of the child in the Children’s Act of 2010 as being a person under the age of 18 is consistent with article 1 (2) of the Constitution, which stipulates that the State is founded on justice and equality and is committed to the respect and promotion of human dignity. According to article 31 of the Constitution, all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection under the law without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religious belief, political opinion or ethnic origin.

69. According to article 3 of the Children’s Act of 2010, the Act is to “have precedence over the provisions of any other law that are inconsistent therewith, to promote the interest of the child and to the extent necessary to eliminate that inconsistency”.

70. The Constitutional Court has ruled on the legal inconsistency between the 2010 Children’s Act and the 1991 Criminal Code regarding the death penalty and the definition of a child. In its ruling No. 2013/51, the Court stated that no one under the age of 18 is to receive the death penalty, even for *hudud* or *qisas* offences, since the applicable legislation is the Children’s Act and not the Criminal Code.

71. A high-level committee consisting of senior officials from a number of government bodies and institutions is in the process of reviewing the 1991 Criminal Code and the 1991 Personal Status Act in order to eliminate any conflict with the 2010 Children’s Act and provide for consistent implementation.



### 3. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

#### 3.1 Non-discrimination (art. 2)

72. Sudan has sought to establish a legislative framework that upholds children's right to non-discrimination; protects their best interests and their right to life, survival and development; respects their opinions and involves them in the issues that affect them. All this is reflected in the programmes, projects and activities of the five-year plan for childhood 2012–2016.

73. According to article 31 of the 2005 Interim Constitution, all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection under the law without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religious belief, political opinion or ethnic origin.

74. The 2005 Constitution includes specific provisions for children's rights, including the State's obligation to provide free and compulsory primary education (art. 44 (2)). For its part, article 36 (3) states: "The death penalty may not be carried out against women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, until two years have passed since the breastfeeding began."

75. The principle of non-discrimination is enshrined in article 5 (2) (c) of the Children's Act of 2010, which states: "Children have the right to be protected against all forms of unjust discrimination." Article 83 (2) of the Act stipulates: "The judicial authorities are to guarantee all children who are victims of the offences stipulated under articles 45 and 46 undiscriminated access to procedures whereby they can obtain compensation for the injuries they have suffered from the persons legally responsible for those offences."

76. According to article 84 (1) of the Act: "Any person, who has reasonable cause to believe that the rights of a child have been violated or that the child's parents or guardian, or the person entrusted with the child's care, though able to provide the child with adequate nutrition, clothing, medical care or education, are refusing or neglecting to do so, may advise such persons of their duty and, if they persistently fail to respond, may report the matter to the nearest official authority."

77. There is no discriminatory treatment against children of particular categories at the national or state levels. A set of measures has been put in place to provide protection for children born outside of marriage. They include awareness-raising programmes and the introduction of temporary and permanent *kafalah* programmes whereby the Government seeks to ensure that foster families are found within the community, that a newborn child is registered in the civil registry under a special entry for a new family and that the child is given a national identity number.

#### 3.2 Best interests of the child

78. The Children's Act of 2010 stipulates the basic principle that the best interests of the child are to be upheld in any measures concerning that child. According to article 5 (2) (d) of the Act: "The protection and the best interests of the child are to be paramount in all decisions and measures affecting childhood, families or the environment, irrespective of the body that issues or takes them." This provision reinforces the priority status of the best interests of the child and identifies measures to protect and promote the rights of children across all sectors, including social welfare, the police, the judiciary, the armed forces, education and healthcare. This is stated directly and indirectly in the Labour Code of 1997, while the best interests of the child are also addressed and given prominence in the Criminal Code of 1991.

79. Examples of the steps taken to enforce the Children's Act and other laws that have a bearing on the best interests of the child include the establishment of juvenile courts and of police departments for the protection of families and children, as well as training for law enforcement personnel on standard operating procedures.

80. Efforts are ongoing to put an end to female genital mutilation and child marriage. These will be discussed in the section on violence against children.

81. On the matter of child support, on 14 November 2010, the Supreme Court issued a ruling under which a divorced woman was to obtain alimony payments for her two children from her former husband, the ruling to have retroactive effect from the date the case had been brought, on 6 January 2010. The ruling stated that, “unlike payments for other relatives, alimony payments for children are to be applied retroactively”. This is evidence of the special treatment reserved for children and their best interests at all stages in cases affecting them under Sudanese law, particularly in matters relating to personal status.

### 3.3 Right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

82. Children’s right to survival and development as envisaged in the international treaties ratified by the Sudan are also enshrined as an integral part of the Interim Constitution of the Sudan of 2005.

83. Article 5 (2) (e) of the Children’s Act of 2010 stipulates: “The State is to guarantee all of children’s lawful rights, in particular the right to kinship and the right to life, to a name, to a nationality, to be breastfed, to care, to clothing, to housing, to education and to the administration of their affairs in accordance with the present Act” and with the Health Act of 2008, the Education Planning Act of 2001, the Civil Registry Act of 2001 and the Sudanese Nationality Act of 1993, as amended in 2005.

84. Article 5 (2) (e) of the Children’s Act of 2010 covers a number of children’s rights including the right to survival and development in addition to the right to a name, to a nationality and to education. It also addresses the duties and obligations of parents to protect their offspring, especially with regard to breastfeeding and care. Article 20 of the Act deals with the responsibilities of parents to provide clothing and housing and to administer their children’s affairs.

85. The ruling of the Constitutional Court that death sentences are not to be carried out against persons under the age of 18 has already been mentioned in the section concerning the definition of the child.

86. The Ministry of Health runs a free treatment programme for children under the age of 5 via its primary healthcare institutions. Thanks to the Ministry’s efforts, 4,096,489<sup>13</sup> under-5s were able to benefit from free treatment and medicine in 2015. Further details are to be found in section 7, which deals with healthcare.

### 3.4 Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

87. Article 5 (2) (j) of the Children’s Act of 2010 stipulates: “Children are to be guaranteed the right freely to express their opinions and desires and to take an effective part in judicial, administrative, social or educational processes in accordance with their age and degree of maturity.”

88. The National Council for Child Welfare has organized programmes and activities at the national level, with the involvement of children from different groups who are living in exceptional circumstances. It has also provided support for them to participate at the regional and international levels, most significantly in the review of reports submitted by the Sudan under international and regional treaties concerning children. These include the initial report under the two Optional Protocols, submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the initial report under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which was submitted to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of the African Union Commission.

89. The views of children on issues that affect them in the Sudan was canvassed in a 2010 study conducted by Save the Children Sweden and the Children’s Rights Institute. A total of 184 children from different groups took part in the initiative, 113 boys and 71 girls. The study showed that children are aware of many of the protection issues facing them and that certain

<sup>13</sup> Statement of the Federal Minister of Health before the National Assembly concerning the Ministry’s performance in 2015 and the first quarter of 2016.

risks go unreported for social reasons, such as corporal punishment, female genital mutilation and child marriage. Instances of violence in neighbourhood schools are sometimes reported to teachers and adults, and this has led to the development of awareness-raising programmes for families and local communities. The importance of involving children and respecting their opinions is reflected in the Children's Act of 2010, and this has led to greater clarity of vision in police-run family and child protection units and in local-level community-based child protection networks.

90. Efforts are being made to reconstitute children's parliaments at the national level. To that end, the National Council for Child Welfare cooperated with partners on a 2016 draft regulation for the formation of children's parliaments both nationally and at the state level, then submitted the draft to children's groups. The regulation includes provisions for revitalizing children's parliaments in the states. For its part, the national children's parliament has 105 members, including children from educational institutions as well as other categories of youngsters such as homeless children and children with disabilities. The parliament seeks to train children in democratic procedures, imbue them with debating skills and bring the issues that affect them to the attention of decision makers.

91. In 2013, the general assembly of the children's parliament held a special session at the building of the National Assembly (parliament) in the presence of the President and a number of members of parliament. The session took place in the wake of certain demands made by the children's parliament, which may be summarized as follows: developing education; improving the school environment; criminalizing corporal punishment in schools; establishing more child protection mechanisms against, inter alia, child marriage and female genital mutilation; and creating clubs for children with disabilities.

92. Children from primary schools in the states of Gedaref, Nile River and Khartoum have set up discussion forums to participate in the Saleema Initiative to end female genital mutilation and protect children against other harmful practices. More details about the Saleema Initiative are to be found in section 4.

93. Children have been empowered to advocate for the recognition of their rights in the forthcoming Constitution. The first step in this process was training imparted to 25 children – 13 girls, and 12 boys – in March 2015 on how to promote and garner support for their rights at various levels and how to raise awareness about the importance of incorporating children's rights into the new Constitution. The training concluded with a workshop that produced recommendations in the form of a booklet.

94. From 20–22 October 2014, the Sudan hosted the first regional forum of the Saleema Initiative against female genital mutilation. The forum – which was held in the capital Khartoum, and was attended by neighbouring States: Yemen, Somalia, Egypt, Kenya, Eritrea and Djibouti – had an integrated programme that included three principal activities. One of these, which preceded the official opening of the forum, involved a group of 31 young persons – 15 female and 16 male – representing several sectors such as youth federations, states and persons with disabilities. The meeting lasted two days and included a story about "Saleema" and a workshop for young people the results of which were then included in the activities of the forum proper. The voices of the young persons speaking on behalf of Saleema were recorded in a video and presented to the participants in the forum along with a rap song about Saleema, which the young people sang live. In cooperation with the National Council for Child Welfare, the young people involved also presented a plan of action and a supporting vision for the eradication of female genital mutilation.

### **Children win case for Sudanese citizenship**

- On 10 August 2015, the Constitutional Court in the Sudan considered case No. 2015/153 which concerned an appeal filed by 5 children from the Sudan whose father had acquired South Sudanese nationality after the secession and whose mother was Sudanese. The children were requesting to be granted Sudanese nationality. In September 2016, the Court ruled that the children were entitled to Sudanese nationality on the basis of their mother's nationality, in accordance with article 7 of the Interim Constitution of the Sudan of 2005.

95. In May 2015, the National Council for Child Welfare and UNICEF organized a three-day training course for adolescents of both sexes between the ages of 12 and 17. The participants represented the children's parliament, children with disabilities, voluntary organizations working with children, the National Federation of Sudanese Youth and the General Sudanese Student Union. During the course, the participants considered six draft implementing regulations for the 2010 Children's Act and discussed the topic of juvenile criminal justice, as mentioned above.

96. Sudan annually celebrates international, regional and national days such as International Children's Day, African Children's Day and Sudanese Children's Day. The celebrations, which are held in coordination with the competent authorities, provide an opportunity to review and address issues affecting children. Children also participate in international and regional forums on children's issues.

### **Participation of children in the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Sudan**

- Twenty-seven children between the ages of 13 and 18 (10 girls and 17 boys) took part in a workshop dedicated to the report. They represented a children's educational reformatory, the Bashair home for homeless girls and the Taiba home for homeless boys as well as three voluntary associations: the National Federation for the Blind (children's forum), the Amal institute for the education of deaf persons and the SOS Children's Villages organization. The children formed five working groups which produced the following results:
- The need to intensify training for police officers on child-friendly standards, to improve the environment in children's shelters, to enhance the quantity and quality of meals and to extend children's shelters to all states.

- The child participants emphasized the need to provide open shelters and continuous healthcare for children living in street situations, and to raise community awareness about the issues they face. The participants pointed out that social workers dealing with street children needed to treat them well, provide nutrition and reunite them with their families. The children also spoke about the need for the State constantly to monitor foster families and to raise awareness among communities.
- The participants discussed the need to reduce the costs of assistive services for children with disabilities, including the cost of the materials used to make prosthetic limbs, as well as the need to provide basic aids and assistive devices for the education of such children, depending upon their type of disability.
- The participants underscored the importance of implementing and enforcing the Children's Act as well as decrees for the provision of free education and the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools. They also enjoined the creation of cultural libraries in schools and highlighted the need to sensitize communities about the importance of education for girls.
- The participants discussed the need to reduce the costs of assistive services for children with disabilities, including the cost of the materials used to make prosthetic limbs, as well as the need to provide basic aids and assistive devices for the education of such children, depending upon their type of disability.
- The participants also suggested that penalties for the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts should be increased via the application of the Children's Act and the Armed Forces Act. They pointed to the need to educate grass-roots communities in this regard, and to expand cultural and recreational activities for children. Lastly, they highlighted the importance of enforcing the child-labour provisions of the Children's Act and the Labour Code.

## **4. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8 and 13–17)**

### **4.1 Registration of children at birth and the granting of name and nationality (art. 7)**

97. Under article 7 (2) of the Constitution, every person born to a Sudanese mother or father has an inalienable right to Sudanese nationality and citizenship.

98. Under article 5 (2) (h) and (i) of the Children's Act, children have the right to request that their name be changed if that name insults or disparages their dignity or their religious belief. Children also have the right to obtain a copy of their birth certificate free of charge.

99. The Directorate General for Civil Registry, which is part of the Ministry of the Interior, is the official body responsible for birth registration under the Civil Registry Act of 2011. The registration system is decentralized at the local, state and national levels.

100. Within the framework of the national registration project, Sudan has managed to establish an online network that links maternity hospitals and general hospitals (private and State-run) with the Directorate General for Civil Registry. So far, 343 out of a total of 685 hospitals have been linked to the network and work is continuing to connect the remaining hospitals.<sup>14</sup>

101. Between 4 and 10 August, the Directorate General for Civil Registry managed to record 2,256 children who were missing from the registry.<sup>15</sup>

102. According to the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey, the birth registration of children under the age of 5 was 33.0 per cent, a figure that went up to 59.3 per cent (49.7 per cent in rural areas and 84.5 per cent in urban areas) according to the Sudan Household Health Survey of 2010. Data from a 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey suggests that the national birth registration rate reached 67.3 per cent (89.0 per cent in urban areas and 59.2 per cent in rural areas). The Minister of Finance and the Economy has issued a decree that birth certificates are to be issued free of charge for children up to age of 1.

#### **4.2 Preservation of identity (art. 8)**

103. Under article 5 (2) (i) of the Children's Act, newborn infants have the right to obtain a birth certificate identifying their parents, without fees (free of charge for one year). For its part, article 28 of the Civil Registry Act stipulates children's right to be registered immediately after birth, article 29 specifies which persons are responsible for reporting births and article 42 sets forth the penalties for violations of the Act.

104. The Civil Registry Act envisages penalties for anyone who alters information or gives incorrect information regarding a child's identity. It also regulates how, without stigma or discrimination, the elements of an identity are to be imparted to children of unknown origin.

#### **4.3 Freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information (art. 13)**

105. Under article 5 (2) (j) of the Children's Act, all children have the right to express their opinions freely and to take an effective part in judicial and administrative proceedings, social events and education, depending upon their degree of mental and physical maturity.

106. School regulations underscore the importance of school activities such as literary, cultural and sporting societies, all of which provide children with a platform to express their views. The overall supervision of school activities is the responsibility of an administrative office that oversees student activities.

107. There also exist children's cultural centres and children's theatres, both in the capital and in the states, which likewise serve as platforms for children to express themselves. This right is subject to restrictions imposed in regard to decent behaviour and moral values, with a view to serving the best interests of the child.

108. Children from various states of the Sudan come together with children's organizations in a national creative festival for young people, in which the children are able to compete in 15 different activities. The festival is held annually in one or another of the country's states.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Directorate General for Civil Registry, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Directorate General for Civil Registry, 2016.

### **Filmmaking for children initiative**

The idea of an initiative to train children to make films arose in January 2015 at the behest of a voluntary worker. The basis of the initiative is that children should make films for themselves, and opportunities for basic training in the art of filmmaking were duly announced via social media. Nearly 500 children applied of whom 16 of both sexes aged between 9 and 16 were selected to take part. The training took place in Khartoum from January to May 2015. The initiative aimed to provide a new outlet for children's right to express themselves, participate and make their opinions known to the larger community via creative filmed works they made themselves. The training included a theoretical component making up 30 per cent and a practical component made up of 70 per cent. It also included visits to several institutions associated with the audiovisual arts and filmmaking, such as the Sudan Film Factory, Sudanese national television, University of Khartoum Radio, Sudanese Voices Group, Sudan medical radio station, Blue Nile Television, etc. Friends of the initiative provided in-kind support for training in the form of cameras, sound recording equipment and lighting. The Journalists for Children Association also contributed in the first year by providing a space for training at its own headquarters in the National Council for Child Welfare. Further assistance was forthcoming from Sweden House in Khartoum, which hosted the second season of training, as well as from the Children's Rights Association and the Sudan Film Factory. In 2015 and 2016, thanks to cooperation with the Adef Foundation, five children were given the opportunity to train in Egypt. The closing ceremony of the first and second editions of the initiative was run in coordination with volunteers from the Sadagaat Charity Community and the Hawadeth Youth Street Association, which is a voluntary association that collects donations for sick persons unable to pay for their own treatment.

The initiative was able to continue into a second season of training for children in 2016. The films were premiered on 17 August 2016 at a hotel in Khartoum, in the presence of more than 3,000 people plus a further 2,000 who were unable to enter the cinema due to lack of space. The screening of the children's films was attended by their families, creative groups with interests in cinema and photography, child rights activists and the media. The films made and directed by the children addressed a range of issues that the children themselves see as priorities such as child labour, neglect by parents and family, environmental conservation, child rape, voluntary work, child begging, autism, the impact of parental separation on children's lives, etc.

#### **4.4 Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)**

109. The 2005 Constitution of Sudan guarantees every citizen, regardless of age or origin, the right to freedom of thought and religion. The right of children to proclaim their religion is not subject to any restriction. Article 6 of the Constitution enjoins the State to respect a body of rights relating to freedom of religion. They include:

110. The right to worship or assemble in connection with any religion or belief and to establish and maintain places for that purpose (article 6 (a)).

111. The right to acquire and possess movable and immovable assets related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief (article 6 (c)).

112. The right to teach religion or belief in places suitable for such a purpose (article 6 (e)).

113. As regards multilingualism, article 8 (1) of the Constitution states: “All indigenous languages of the Sudan are national languages and shall be respected, developed and promoted.” Article 8 (4) authorizes the legislature in any state to adopt any other national language as an additional official working language in addition to Arabic and English.

114. The Ministry of Education provides schools with both Christian and Islamic educational material, and it is left to children to choose the curriculum that corresponds to their beliefs. In this way, no restrictions are placed on freedom of choice, while at the same time respecting the beliefs of others.

#### **4.5 Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)**

115. The right of children to form literary, cultural and sports associations is enshrined in school regulations.

116. Groups of children have been selected as part of a project to establish children’s parliaments. There are children’s parliaments in 9 schools in the states of Khartoum and Al-Gazira.

117. Children’s parliaments have been created in the states of Kassala, White Nile, Nile River, Blue Nile, North Kordofan and Red Sea.

#### **4.6 Protection of private life (art. 16)**

118. The Constitution of the Sudan contains a number of articles to protect private life, as mentioned earlier. The Children’s Act also protects children against violations and prescribes penalties in that regard.

119. In cooperation with the Journalists for Children Association, training workshops were organized in March 2015 for 85 media professionals. The group included 30 programmers, producers and directors from national television, 30 radio journalists and 25 press journalists, in cooperation with the National Council for Press and Publications. The training focused on how to tackle children’s issues from a child’s rights perspective, particularly protection of private life and respect for privacy.

#### **4.7 Access to information and protection from harmful media content (art. 17)**

120. The Council for Literary and Artistic Works was formed under article 6 (1) of the Literary and Artistic Works Act of 2001. Article 7 (1) of the Act stipulates: “By decree of the Council of Ministers, the Council is to be constituted of a director and an appropriate number of members possessing the necessary skills and experience, some of whom must represent the relevant and competent authorities.” Article 15 of the Act states that works are prohibited and may not be imported, brought in, published, printed, circulated or handled if they undermine religious values or public morals; offend beliefs, customs or religions; offend against people on the basis of their colour or sex, or glorify one sex over another; conflict



with State policy and national security; are co-produced with a hostile State or propagandize on behalf of a hostile State; or are works the entry of which is prohibited by a decree of the Council.

121. In April 2016, the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology formed a national committee to protect children from online perils, promote awareness of the positive uses of the Internet and pursue partnerships between official institutions and bodies involved in combating the online exploitation of children. The committee holds regular meetings in order to formulate a clear vision of the risks children can face when using the Internet and to develop plans and programmes to protect them. The committee is chaired by the National Telecommunications Authority; the rapporteur is from the National Council for Child Welfare and members are from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the National Radio and Television Authority, the National Centre for Information, the department for the protection of families and children, juvenile prosecution offices, cybercrime prosecution offices, telecommunications companies and civil society organizations.

122. In the partnership with the Journalists for Children Association, monthly media forums have been held on issues that can affect children, such as sexual violence, education, and the safe movement of children. The forums were attended by media professionals, civil society organizations, stakeholders, activists and graduate students.

123. With funding from UNICEF, a workshop was held in December 2014 to train 40 media professionals and journalists from various outlets and news agencies on correct professional conduct when dealing with children's issues and on international publishing standards.

124. At the initiative of the Journalists for Children Association, an honour charter on how to deal with issues affecting children in the media was rolled out in November 2016. A number of specialists and experts, the Sudanese Journalists' Federation and leading figures in audiovisual media all contributed to the charter, which commits media professionals from official and unofficial outlets to abide by child protection standards when dealing with issues affecting children.

125. As part of events to mark International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, a cultural night was held under the title "Saleema night in literature and popular art". The event, which was held at the National Theatre in February 2015 in cooperation with the Women's Union in the state of Khartoum, was attended by around 200 people.

126. Child protection issues were addressed in 45 weekly segments of the *Beitna* ("Our Home") programme, which was broadcast daily on national television from January to December 2015.

127. From August 2015 to the present, a weekly programme for children has been broadcast on Youth and Sports Radio.

128. International days for children are regularly commemorated on radio and television programmes, such as African Children's Day, International Children's Day, International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation and World Day against Child Labour.

## **5. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)**

### **5.1 Abuse and neglect (art. 19)**

129. The Constitution states: "All persons have the right to freedom and security, and no person may be arrested or detained, or be deprived of or restricted in their freedom save for reasons specified by law and in accordance with the procedures defined therein."

130. The 2010 Children’s Act protects children against “all forms of violence, harm, inhumane treatment, physical, moral or sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation”.<sup>16</sup>

131. School councils and community centres have been the focus of an increasing number of awareness-raising programmes and campaigns, most of them run by NGOs and local administrations. Community centres are particularly active in camps of internally displaced persons and in villages where they focus on raising awareness about child protection issues such as abuse and neglect, child recruitment in armed conflict, female genital mutilation and child marriage.

132. The Ministry of Social Welfare has made successful use of Zakat funds. It has also integrated economic initiatives, such as cash transfer programmes, with activities that aim to reduce various forms of violence. Its interventions in this regard range between providing training to parents and linking families to microfinance and social security programmes. Additional interventions have effectively sought to address vulnerabilities and eliminate challenges caused by economic factors. Monitoring and evaluation has shown that these initiatives – over and above the main prevention, protection and response strategies for children – have played an important role in reducing violence against children.<sup>17</sup>

133. One example of good practice in the area of prevention is an initiative put forward that aims to extend the coverage of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme so that it is not limited to child soldiers released by armed groups but also includes all children at risk of neglect, abandonment or abuse. In this way it benefits vulnerable children most in need of care and protection.

#### **Saleema Initiative**

The Saleema Initiative was launched in 2009 by the National Council for Child Welfare and civil society organizations, with the support of UNICEF. In Arabic the word refers to a girl who is whole, physically and mentally intact, healthy, complete and pure, as her Lord created her. The initiative is based on a package of positive communication methodologies, with social marketing techniques playing an important role in the preparation of visual and written materials for the Initiative at all levels. The materials, which seek to shift from focusing on problems to focusing on solutions, are intended to arouse feelings of confidence, optimism and positivity through engagement with others via different channels such as posters, song, television and radio programmes, theatre and cartoons. Clothing and headdresses have been designed and distributed at public events organized by communities and networks that urge people to renounce female genital mutilation. Participants in the Initiative chose to call it “Saleema” to create new positive associations and meanings to describe uncircumcised girls and women. The core message of the

<sup>16</sup> Article 5 (2) (k) of the Children’s Act.

<sup>17</sup> Mapping/Assessment of Child Protection System in Sudan (focus on Social Welfare System), MoWSS, NCCW, UNICEF.2015.

Initiative is that “every girl is born healthy (i.e., saleema); let her grow up healthy.” A supporting campaign launched in maternity hospitals aims to provide opportunities and a regulated environment for families that have had a baby daughter in order to help them ensure she remains intact throughout her life. Trained staff in those hospitals provide advice and guidance on how to renounce female genital mutilation as well as information about the Saleema Initiative itself. Families then take the “Saleema” pledge to welcome their newborn girls and to undertake to keep them whole and healthy for life.

134. There are 342 community-level child protection committees and networks which play an important role in responding to and preventing abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. These community-level committees, which are present in all locations where there are internally displaced persons or refugees, act as forums (frequently unofficial) in which members of the community can seek child protection solutions. The committees, which represent all sides including children, also operate in areas affected by armed conflict.

135. The Ministry of Social Development in the state of Khartoum has organized awareness-raising sessions in semi-urban areas. The sessions target women and focus on protection measures against violence and other risks. The Ministry has also trained young persons on measures to defend themselves, and it has an “open theatre” project to provide children with information about how to protect themselves against – and how to report – violence and abuse. The Ministry also intervenes in support of families by providing training in project management and microfinance. This serves to support poor families and helps them supplement their income so that they can provide for their needs and help their children continue their education and avoid child labour. Women and families in local communities also receive training in income-generating activities.

136. Child protection inside the education system is limited to efforts to combat violence in schools and to assist teachers in identifying issues that can affect the well-being of children, such as child marriage and disability. It was observed that in none of the states are teachers responsible for helping to identify children who are at risk of abuse or who have already suffered abuse. Nonetheless, efforts on the part of the Ministry of Health in the state of Khartoum have led to the publication and distribution of a guide on detection and intervention. The guide is being implemented by teachers in schools for vulnerable children or children at risk.

137. It is undoubtedly true that there is a need for greater prevention and response services in the field of child protection. This is to be achieved by taking a more integrated and comprehensive approach that aims to strengthen basic services for children through social welfare action plans. For example, there is no clear structure for social welfare at the community level. The exception to this is the state of Khartoum where there are community development centres in some administrative units; in addition, there are 53 community development centres affiliated with the Ministry of Social Welfare that run programmes focusing on early childhood, female empowerment and poverty reduction. Service delivery approaches vary from one state to another, although they have some points in common. The balance between prevention and response services is different in Khartoum and North Darfur, where the focus of children protection services is on response, whereas there is a healthy balance between prevention and response in the states of Western Darfur and Southern Darfur.

## 5.2 Abolishing harmful practices (art. 24 (3))

### Female genital mutilation

138. In 2012, the National Council for Child Welfare formed a working group led by the director of the Council and with a joint rapporteur with the Federal Ministry of Health. The membership of the group is formed of representatives from the relevant governmental bodies as well as from civil society organizations, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as seven national experts. The group serves to enhance coordination between official and voluntary mechanisms on programmes and activities related to practices and social norms that are harmful to children.

139. According to the 2010 Sudan Household Health Survey, the national rate of female genital mutilation among women and girls aged between 15 and 49 was 65.5 per cent. The 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey indicated that the rate of female genital mutilation among women and girls in that age bracket was 86.6 per cent.

140. The rate of this practice among girls aged between 0 and 14 was 37 per cent, also according to the 2010 Sudan Household Health Survey, while the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey gave that figure as 31.5 per cent. The decrease gives some indication of the impact of the ongoing efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation in the Sudan.

141. The Saleema Initiative is a unique, multisectoral, comprehensive, human rights-based undertaking that was adopted by the Government of the Sudan in 2009. It is intended to serve as an instrument to implement the national strategy for the elimination of female genital mutilation, which is being led by the National Council for Child Welfare and partners, with support from UNICEF. A review conducted in 2014 indicated that the central message of Saleema – “every girl is born healthy; let her grow up healthy” – had reached 80 per cent of the population.

142. There is continuing dialogue at the community level with a view to eliminating female genital mutilation in all states of the Sudan. By 2016, a total of 995 communities had announced that they were renouncing the practice, while Saleema training courses had been held in 15 States (the exceptions being West Kordofan, South Kordofan and White Nile) for 450 participants from government agencies, community-based organizations, grass-roots organizations and research institutions. Those persons then went on to lead training for Saleema facilitators in 20 districts in 9 States: Khartoum, Gezira, Sennar, North Kordofan, South Darfur, Gedaref, Red Sea, Nile River and Northern.

### Child marriage and forced marriage

143. The National Council for Child Welfare has included child marriage as one of the social customs and practices affecting the development of children. This is because the marriage of children is a threat to efforts to achieve the goals of the national strategy for the family, the national policy for women’s empowerment and other strategies for the protection of women and children that are part of the State’s quarter century strategic planning.

144. A family health survey conducted in 2010 indicated that the rate of child marriage at the national level in the Sudan was 37.6 per cent. The multiple indicator cluster survey of 2014 gave the figure as 38 per cent. A knowledge, attitudes and practices study on child marriage took place in 2013 in six states (South Darfur, East Darfur West Darfur, Central Darfur, Gedaref and Khartoum). The study, which targeted families and local communities, showed that 24 per cent of women who married under the age of 18 had left school without completing their education for one of several reasons: distance (8 per cent), fees (15 per cent), marriage (32 per cent).

145. A dialogue on the draft of a national strategy for the elimination of child marriage was rolled out in 2015 under the patronage of the First Lady, who is the patron of a campaign to end child marriage in the Sudan. The launch was overseen by the Minister of Welfare and Social Security and was attended by number of other ministers as well as by members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of foreign embassies in the Sudan; representatives of international, regional and national organizations; representatives of government ministries and of a number of media outlets. The event was also attended by the executive head of the

Organization of African First Ladies. In 2016, forums were held with parliamentarians, the Fiqh Academy, the media and NGOs to discuss and reach consensus on the strategy.

### **5.3 Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)**

146. Departments for the protection of families and children provide medical care, psychological and legal support and access to specialized investigators and prosecutors, all in a single office. Cases involving children are handled in a separate area while, in some units and courts, children's testimonies are video recorded to reduce the need for repeated sittings and court appearances.

147. Over and above their mandate, the departments for the protection of families and children do not limit their response to the three categories of children (victims, witnesses and offenders). For example, they also respond to reports concerning children received via the free helpline 9696. The line, which was set up in 2009, provides immediate advice and assistance 24 hours a day and goes some way to enhancing public confidence in the police. UNICEF has also developed a toolkit to raise public awareness about the helpline.

148. A total of 557 community protection networks have been formed and are operating effectively in the area of child protection. At the same time, 542 capacity-building courses have been run by networks of child-protection organizations in all states of the Sudan on issues such as sexual and gender-based violence. Psychosocial support services and legal assistance are provided to survivors of gender-based violence.

149. In addition to this, 624 adolescents have been imbued with knowledge and life skills that will reduce their exposure to and help to protect them from violence.

150. Although some progress has been made on inter-institutional referrals, the capacity to continue to monitor and support children and families beyond the initial crisis phase is generally limited, due to the reduced number of social workers and the insufficient provision of resources for such services.

### **5.4 Right not to suffer torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including corporal punishment (arts. 37 (a) and 28 (2))**

151. Article 1 (2) of the Constitution stipulates that the State is committed to the respect and promotion of human dignity and is founded on justice, equality and the advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Article 14 (1) and (2) enjoins the State to adopt policies and provide facilities for the welfare of children and young persons, ensure that they develop morally and physically, and protect them from moral and physical abuse and abandonment. For its part, article 17 (c) stipulates that the foreign policy of the State is to be employed so as to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in regional and international forums.

152. In part II of the Constitution, article 27 (1) and (3) states that the Bill of Rights constitutes a covenant between the people of the Sudan and their federal or state governments. Moreover, all rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights treaties and instruments ratified by the Republic of the Sudan are to be an integral part of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution.

153. Articles 28 and 30 of the Constitution designate slavery and forced labour as crimes and grant every human being a fundamental right to life, dignity and personal integrity.

154. Article 5 (2) (k) of the Children's Act guarantees "protection for male and female children against all forms of violence, harm, inhumane treatment, physical, moral or sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation". The enforcement of this article is the responsibility of child justice institutions, notably the family and child protection units.

155. A regulation of the Ministry of Education and the National Council for Child Welfare intended to prohibit corporal punishment in educational institutions is in the process of being approved. It aims to ensure that children enjoy a high level of protection in schools and to

promote positive attitudes among students by upholding best practices and optimal school curricula.

156. Deeply held beliefs and existing cultures mean that certain risks such as corporal punishment, female genital mutilation or child marriage go underreported. Around 29 per cent of women and a third of men interviewed in the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey expressed approval for the corporal punishment of children. Around 64 per cent of the children interviewed in the survey had been subjected to “discipline” in the form of verbal abuse or corporal punishment in the month prior to the interview. This is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4

**Children who have been subjected to disciplinary measures<sup>18</sup>**

<i>Type of discipline</i>	<i>Percentage of children aged 1–14 who were disciplined</i>
Strict corporal punishment	14 per cent
Other corporal punishment	34 per cent
Verbal discipline	53 per cent
Non-violent discipline	22 per cent
Any kind of corporal discipline	64 per cent

## 5.5 Measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims (art. 39)

157. The National Council for Child Welfare has issued a package of training materials intended to guide providers of psychosocial support services, particularly in child-friendly spaces, and community workers in conflict zones.

158. Child protection social workers play a key role in identifying and treating children who suffer severe abuse and neglect. They receive referrals from various authorities which they then evaluate on the basis of their own expertise in order to determine the actual requirements of the children involved. They then take steps to help the youngsters via, inter alia, cooperation with the police, with the child concerned and with the family courts.

159. Social welfare services are also provided by social workers in other institutions involved in child protection, such as the juvenile courts, public prosecution offices, correctional institutions, schools, child welfare councils at the state level, the Humanitarian Aid Commission and a number of NGOs and healthcare facilities.

160. The Ministry of Health has set up certain response services in the state of Khartoum such as psychological trauma treatment for children who have suffered violence, therapy for survivors of sexual violence, counselling for children with mental health issues and children with disabilities, community outreach services and early detection services for health and behavioural disorders among children.

## 5.6 Availability of child helplines

161. The 9696 child helpline in the Sudan operates round the clock. The department for the protection of families and children in the state of Khartoum is working to upgrade and develop the helpline in order to provide optimal services for children, and efforts are also being made to launch the helpline in other states. Twenty-five counsellors take calls on the helpline and provide psychological, social and legal support. The line seeks to respond to cases of abuse, neglect and mental and emotional abuse of children, as well as cases involving children who are at risk, child offenders and missing children. Other cases involve vagrant youngsters, school dropouts, children who suffer violence at school, cases of child

<sup>18</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics, multiple indicator cluster survey, 2014.

exploitation in any form and children caught up in family disputes. Table 5 shows the number and type of calls received by the child helpline in 2015.

Table 5  
Number of calls received by the child helpline

<i>Reason for call</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Unspecified</i>	<i>Total</i>
Request for information	1 007	909	107	2 023
Family relations	163	298	42	503
Issues related to school	75	107	5	187
Peer relations	185	333	16	534
Vagrancy/flight/basic needs	56	40	6	102
Mental, psychological and social health	101	170	13	284
Physical health	264	267	24	555
Legal issues	60	61	4	125
Sexual issues	37	9	2	48
Violence and aggression	37	37	5	79
Discrimination	3	4	-	7
Drug use	5	4	-	9
Commercial exploitation	5	6	-	11
Special needs	7	9	-	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 005</b>	<b>2 254</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>4 483</b>

## 6. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1) and (2), 20, 21, 25 and 27 (4))

### 6.1 Family support<sup>19</sup>

162. Important developments in the field of social security were made in 2015, notably thanks to the National Pension Fund, the National Social Insurance Fund, the National Health Insurance Fund, the Zakat Office and the Savings and Social Development Bank. In all, 20,379,538 persons – or 55.7 per cent of the total population – benefited from the services of those bodies in 2015. Also in 2015, 2,691,096 families benefited from zakat payments.

163. The direct (or cash) social support project is an urgent poverty alleviation measure that was launched in 2011 and targeted 100,000 families. That number was raised in 2013 and, by the beginning of 2015, the number of target families stood at 350,000. Between April and October 2015, 385,102 families (of a total 500,000 target families) had benefited, an implementation rate of 86 per cent.

164. The Pensions Act covers 4.1 per cent of pensioners and workers with respect to the total population of working age (17,062,683). In fact, as of the end of 2015, the number of participants stood at 699,570, or 100 per cent of the target according to the Act. Government and private sector funds were merged in 2016, and work is ongoing to establish a comprehensive wage and implement the benefits envisaged under the Pensions and Social Insurance Act of 2016. The payment rate of contributions on the part of states has also increased, with the average standing at 91 per cent and the extremes ranging between a maximum of 100 per cent and a minimum of 85 per cent. In addition to this, a new grant of 100 Sudanese pounds has been paid out to all pensioners beginning in April 2016, while more than 70,000 pensioners have benefited from social support programmes for government sector pensions.

<sup>19</sup> Reports of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, 2016.

165. At the same time, 111,874 individuals and 55,045 families benefited from microfinance services from the Savings and Social Development Bank in 2016, for a total of 538 million. The performance rate stood at 112 per cent and the growth rate at 62 per cent with respect to the same period of the previous year, while the performance rate was 101 per cent with respect to the plan for the period.

166. The fifth conference on social responsibility, which was held in the state of North Kordofan in 2015 under the patronage of the President of the Republic, had as its slogan “Social responsibility: a strategic partnership for sustainable development”. The conference led to the “El-Obeid Declaration” under which private sector companies, organizations and institutions pledged the sum of 16 billion pounds and undertook to drill wells, establish schools and create training opportunities for young persons. The conference also announced the creation of a national social responsibility award to encourage people to practice social responsibility.

167. In July 2015, the National and Islamic Day for Orphans was commemorated in coordination with a network of organizations that work with orphans. It resulted in new custody arrangements for 732 orphans in Khartoum and other states and the distribution of clothing and school uniforms.

## 6.2 Alternative care

168. According to data from the Mygoma Home for children, which is located in the state of Khartoum and cares for children up to the age of 4 who are deprived of parental care, the number of child deportees since 2005 stands at 446, while 431 children were taken in by the home between January and September 2016.<sup>20</sup>

169. According to a 2015 report by the Ministry of Social Development in the state of Khartoum, since 2007 a total of 5,167 children deprived of parental care have been fostered and are living with other families.

170. Foster families are supervised by trained social workers who make weekly visits and use standardized procedures to monitor signs of growth and development in children. This arrangement has led to stronger relationships between mothers and social workers and has helped to make children feel confident, loved and wanted. Prevention mechanisms have been reinforced at the community level thanks to awareness-raising campaigns in residential neighbourhoods and elsewhere, run in collaboration with religious figures and international voluntary organizations, with the support of UNICEF.

171. In addition to the Mygoma Home, there are four other childcare centres in the state of Khartoum. They are:

- The Child Protection Home, established in 2014 with capacity for 33 children between the ages of 5 and 18.
- The Future Home for girls, established in 2014 with capacity for 26 girls between the ages of 5 and 18.
- The Taiba rehabilitation centre for children living in street situations (boys only), established in 2014 with capacity for 78 youngsters between the ages of 8 and 18.
- The Bashair centre for children living in street situations (girls only), established in 2014 with capacity for just 3 girls.

172. There are also three other shelters, in the states of Gezira, White Nile and Red Sea, where abandoned children can be housed temporarily until permanent arrangements can be found. In Red Sea state in 2014, more than 20 requests for custody of a child were made while the shelter itself was empty.

<sup>20</sup> A report of the Mygoma Child Welfare Home in the state of Khartoum, which is part of the Ministry of Social Development.



173. On 5 and 6 November 2014, on the tenth anniversary of a project to find foster families for children deprived of family care, a national forum was held to evaluate the experiences of the preceding decade. The event was attended by the Minister of Social Development in the state of Khartoum alongside other official and voluntary bodies, in cooperation with the Hope and Homes for Children organization. The forum came up with recommendations in a number of areas – databases, information systems, institutional and organizational frameworks, jurisprudential and legal frameworks, services for children and advocacy and awareness raising – with the intention of promoting the project and extending it to all states of the Sudan.

174. The National Council for Child Welfare organized consultations with a view to strengthening and supporting the national fostering system for children deprived of family care. The consultations, which were held from 22 to 24 August 2016 in cooperation with UNICEF, saw the participation of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, the Ministry of Education, judges in juvenile courts in the state of Khartoum, the Journalists for Children Association, Plan International, Al-Wefaq Society, the SOS Children's Villages organization, the Shamaa Organization and the General Federation of Sudanese Women. The conclusion of the consultations was that the system faces challenges in the form of limited budgets, a lack of statistics and data, and a negative perception of foster children in the community at large. The consultations also produced recommendations regarding the need to extend the family programme, speed up the fostering process, avoid institutional care, strengthen coordination and monitoring of stakeholders, train foster mothers and support the role of the media in promoting the cause of foster children.

175. The National Council for Child Welfare is responsible for protecting unaccompanied or separated children in the Sudan, whether Sudanese or foreign. The Children's Act includes provision for the care of unaccompanied children and children who have been separated from their families. It also addresses the search for children who are missing or who have run or been lured away from their families or from institutions. Child welfare councils and ministries of social welfare at the national and state levels cooperate with international organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden on programmes to trace the families of refugee and internally displaced children in the Sudan.

176. In the states of Darfur as well as in Blue Nile, North Kordofan and South Kordofan, 3,100 separated or unaccompanied children (1,496 boys and 1,604 girls) benefited from alternative care arrangements in families and communities in 2016.

177. In cooperation with partners, the National Council for Child Welfare has developed a national family tracing programme. The Council also coordinates with child welfare councils in the country's 18 states via tracing and reunification committees at the national and state levels, and it maintains data on family tracing. Effective referral mechanisms also operate within departments for the protection of families and children.<sup>21</sup> Table 6 shows the number of children who were traced and reunited with their families in the first half of 2016. In the five states of Darfur as well as in Blue Nile, North Kordofan and South Kordofan, 3,100 separated or unaccompanied children (1,496 boys and 1,604 girls) benefited from alternative care arrangements in families and communities in 2016.<sup>22</sup> Table 6 shows the number of children who were traced and reunited with their families in the first half of 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Reports of the information centre, National Council for Child Welfare.

<sup>22</sup> Mid-year review 2016 (National Council for Child Welfare and UNICEF).

Table 6  
**Number of children who were traced and reunited with their families in the first half of 2016**

	<i>Separated children</i>			<i>Unaccompanied children</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>1 209</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>1 441</b>
Pending	271	459	730	11	151	162	892
Reunited	188	276	464	10	56	66	530
Family verification process underway	5	10	15	1	3	4	19

178. The SOS Children's Villages organization in the Sudan cares for abandoned children, orphans and children without family support, between the ages of 1 day and 1 year. The organization provides long-term family care programmes that provide education, health services and psychosocial support to ensure the children's futures. In the year 2015, 135 children (91 boys and 44 girls) were receiving those services in the organization, via foster mothers in family settings made up of a number of children in a village (each family is cared for by one of the mothers who work in the village). Some of the children go on to receive university education (15 males over the age of 18 and 3 females under the age of 18).<sup>23</sup>

## 7. Disability, basic health services and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1)–(3) and 33)

### 7.1 Persons with disabilities

179. According to the 2008 census, 4.8 per cent of the total population – or 1,463,034 persons – have a disability. Persons with disabilities aged up to 19 account for 1.3 per cent – or 408,603 persons – of all persons with disabilities.

180. The year 2015 was designated as the Year of Disability. Plans and programmes were developed, a framework was sketched out for a draft law on persons with disabilities and a further 10 laws were examined with a view to aligning them with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

181. The authorities are working to produce a government disability certificate and to develop a form that can be used in national information systems. In addition, a number of workshops have been held on how to apply employment quotas for persons with disabilities and to address the issues they face.

182. The Ministry of Education has a policy which it applies to accommodate children with disabilities in State-run schools. Table 7 shows the number of children with disabilities who have been integrated into schools and disability institutes.

Table 7  
**Number of children with disabilities who have been integrated into schools and disability institutes**

<i>State</i>	<i>Students in disability centres</i>	<i>Students with disabilities integrated into schools</i>	<i>Total</i>
Northern	62	1 581	1 642
River Nile	229	2 969	2 208
Khartoum	1 770	7 262	9 022

<sup>23</sup> Report of the SOS Children's Villages organization in the Sudan.

<i>State</i>	<i>Students in disability centres</i>	<i>Students with disabilities integrated into schools</i>	<i>Total</i>
North Darfur	No disability centre	1 677	1 677
South Darfur	22	869	901
East Darfur	60	3 228	3 288
Central Darfur	No disability centre	2 606	2 606
West Darfur	16	10 597	10 612
South Kordofan	6	1 530	1 536
North Kordofan	267	2 253	2 620
West Kordofan	165	405	570
Al-Gazira	11 648	1 456	13 104
Sennar	2 316	2 930	6 242
Blue Nile	10	34	44
White Nile	194	306	500
Kassala	56	2 440	2 496
Gedaref	28	6 964	6 992
Red Sea	472	443	915
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 256</b>	<b>50 203</b>	<b>51 459</b>

*Source:* Special education department in the Ministry of Education.

183. In 2015, a total of 11,827 beneficiaries, including children, were provided with prosthetic limbs, assistive devices and medical and rehabilitative aids. Also in 2015, a mobile workshop in the state of Sennar produced 324 prosthetic limbs, and arrangements were made to establish similar centres at the state level.

184. A total of 685 persons from eight states benefited from facilitated loans for persons with disabilities, for a value of 80 million pounds.

185. A project of the Italian Development Cooperation Agency was launched to support orphaned children with disabilities in the state of Khartoum, with funding of €500,000. The initiative was coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and the Council for Persons with Disabilities in the state of Khartoum.

## **7.2 Survival and development of children (art. 6 (2))**

### **Health and health services, particularly primary healthcare (art. 24)**

#### **Strategies and plans**

186. The Federal Ministry of Health operates under a five-year strategic plan 2012–2016 which identifies healthcare priorities, notably that of universal health coverage. The strategic plan envisages annual plans, which are in the process of being implemented.

187. The healthcare expansion project began in 2013 and continued until 2017. It has five areas of focus: professional and technical capacity-building for workers, expanding healthcare institutions, increasing the coverage of basic healthcare packages, free treatment for children, and the development of rural hospitals.

#### **Funding for healthcare services**

188. State allocated funding for healthcare increased during the course of the second strategy for the healthcare sector 2012–2016. In fact, a large sum – in excess of 840 million pounds – was earmarked for the expansion of primary healthcare services, free treatment and the anti-malaria programme, and for promoting the local component of donor-supported programmes. At the same time, additional funds were allocated for the inclusion of poor families in health insurance, in addition to the funds earmarked for development.

189. Two per cent of federal support to the states was designated for the retention of specialized doctors, general practitioners and midwives. Despite the fact that public funding for healthcare increased from 7 per cent to 9 per cent of the State budget between 2015 and the first quarter of 2016, it still falls far short of the 15 per cent envisioned in the Abuja Declaration.

190. Notwithstanding the contribution of foreign aid to numerous healthcare programmes, particularly in the field of basic healthcare, contributions from donors amounted to just 2 per cent of total spending on health. Foreign support focuses on prevention programmes, such as support from the International Monetary Fund for programmes to combat malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS, as well as support for the healthcare system in general and for an expanded vaccination programme. The Ministry of Health has sought to maximize the benefit of foreign support by integrating healthcare services under a single plan.

191. Around 7 per cent of the total outlay on health was met by social health insurance and around 35 per cent by government disbursements. These are relatively small proportions with respect to the growing role it is hoped that health insurance – which covered 40 per cent of the population by 2015 – will play.

192. Of the funds made available by the public sector, only around 15 per cent is spent on basic healthcare, 48 per cent on medical treatment and 24 per cent on administration. These proportions also need to be reconsidered, and this matter has been addressed in funding projects recently put forward by the State and donors.

#### **Basic healthcare services**

193. Basic healthcare services have been expanded, with a further 337 health units and health centres equipped with beds and staffed by qualified personnel opening in various states of the Sudan in the years 2014 and 2015.

194. In November 2015, contracts were finalized for the refurbishment of 97 rural hospitals. This involved the construction of operating theatres, maternity wards, blood banks and laboratories, all fully funded by the Government of the Sudan. It is expected that the new facilities will be handed over, fully equipped, by the middle of 2016. For its part, the Ministry of Health has introduced certain preventive services including prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and HIV preventive treatment. In addition, 4,912 State-run healthcare institutions – i.e., 85 per cent of all such institutions – provide free malaria treatment. Volunteers provide malaria treatment services in the home in 1,132 local communities, while rapid malaria tests are available free of charge in 2,933 State-run healthcare institutions, 90.9 per cent of the target figure.

195. Impregnated mosquito nets have been distributed to 92 per cent of the target population in rural areas around cities and among displaced persons, refugees and nomads. In all, 11 million long-lasting impregnated mosquito nets were distributed and, in 2014, the number of malaria infections decreased by 72 per cent and the number of deaths from the disease by 62 per cent.

196. The Ministry of Health conducts voluntary HIV/AIDS testing among children in shelters and children who live and work in street situations. The Ministry of Health considers administrators of the shelters to be responsible for the children, and those administrators can seek approval from the Ministry to conduct tests on the children, on a voluntary basis.

197. As part of a free treatment project for children under 5, the Federal Ministry of Health has provided more than 40 types of medicine to treat the most common diseases among children in primary healthcare institutions. With an estimated budget of 125 million pounds in 2015, the project aims to bring down the mortality rate among children under 5 and to reduce the burdensome cost of treatment. The project has helped to treat 4,096,489 children under the age of 5, thanks to the annual supply of medicines to basic healthcare institutions. Each year, moreover, 94,444 pregnant women receive folic acid tablets.

198. Surveys, including the Sudan Household Health Survey of 2006 and 2010, and the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey, have shown a steady improvement in breastfeeding indicators. In fact, the breastfeeding rate for children up to 6 months of age increased from 34 per cent in 2006, to 41 per cent in 2010, reaching 55 per cent in 2014. This increase

coincides with an increase in breastfeeding rates for children up to the age of 1 year, from 88 per cent to 89 per cent, while for children up to the age of 2 the rate went up from 40 per cent to 49 per cent, in the period between 2010 and 2014.

### 7.3 Efforts to address the most widespread health issues, to promote the physical and mental health and well-being of children and to prevent and respond to infectious diseases

199. In order to reduce child mortality, the Federal Ministry of Health and ministries of health at the state level are seeking to accelerate the pace at which health services can be provided to children. Tables 8 and 9 below show vaccination rates at both the national and state levels.

Table 8  
Immunization rates at the national level in 2014, as compared to 2010

<i>Children aged 1 immunized against measles</i>		<i>Overall vaccination coverage</i>	<i>Pentavalent vaccine coverage</i>		<i>Polio vaccine coverage</i>		<i>Tuberculosis vaccine coverage</i>	
<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>
<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
62.30	79.90	50.67	58.40	73.90	62	75.10	74.60	85.30

Source: Multiple indicator cluster survey, 2014.

Table 9  
Immunization rates in all the states of the Sudan in 2014

<i>Type of vaccine</i>	<i>Children aged 1 immunized against measles</i>	<i>Overall vaccination coverage</i>	<i>Pentavalent vaccine coverage</i>	<i>Polio vaccine coverage</i>	<i>Tuberculosis vaccine coverage</i>
<i>State</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Blue Nile	96.70	93.40	96.10	95	97.40
Central Darfur	71.80	45.70	49.10	51.50	75.90
East Darfur	71.50	53.80	57.70	60.20	77.60
Al-Gazira	90.10	81.70	91.40	88.80	94.80
Gedaref	89.50	80.70	87.20	87.50	94.40
Kassala	69.90	54.10	62.80	64	78.40
Khartoum	91.20	85.30	89.90	89.70	95.40
North Darfur	75.10	63.20	67.30	71.30	81.60
North Kordofan	78.20	66.40	73.50	74.90	82.90
Northern	92.90	86.10	89.60	90.90	93.30
Red Sea	61.40	42.90	53.30	60.20	65.70
River Nile	88.50	79.20	88.50	82.20	92.80
Sennar	75.20	58.10	60.70	68.60	80.20
South Darfur	55.90	38.30	42.90	49.50	64.50
South Kordofan	77.60	65.40	69	70.20	77.30

Type of vaccine	Children aged 1 immunized against measles	Overall vaccination coverage	Pentavalent vaccine coverage	Polio vaccine coverage	Tuberculosis vaccine coverage
State	2014 %	2014 %	2014 %	2014 %	2014 %
West Darfur	84.60	56.80	68.60	70.20	90.90
West Kordofan	58.30	36.70	46.50	49.80	72.20
White Nile	86.40	70.20	79.60	77.20	89.90

Source: Multiple indicator cluster survey, 2014.

### Child mortality

200. The Federal Ministry of Health has adopted a road map to reduce neonatal mortality. Significant aspects of the map include a focus on health services for newborn infants at the community level; training for midwives on an integrated prevention and treatment package for newborns; the provision of life-saving equipment and drugs for newborn infants; an information system in which to record births, deaths and the causes of illnesses in children; reinforcing the referral system for midwives and health centres; and raising community awareness about the importance of having trained staff present during home deliveries. The results of the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey show a decrease in the mortality rate of children under 5 at the national level. In fact, a rate of 68 deaths per 1,000 live births was recorded compared to 78 per 1,000 live births recorded in the 2010 Sudan Household Health Survey. The mortality rate of children under 5 at the state level is shown in table 10.

Table 10  
Mortality rate for children under 5 per 1,000 live births in 2014, as compared to 2010, in all states of the Sudan

State	2010	2014
Blue Nile	131	83.90
Central Darfur		77.40
East Darfur		111.70
Al-Gazira	53	53.50
Gedaref	107	76.70
Kassala	87	80.50
Khartoum	67	49.80
North Darfur	69	90.30
North Kordofan	82	41.90
Northern	64	29.90
Red Sea	122	61.20
River Nile	60	35.10
Sennar	62	51.60
South Darfur	95	71.90
South Kordofan	123	82.10
West Darfur	88	91.40
West Kordofan		95.40
White Nile	74	65.80

201. The 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey showed that infant mortality stood at 52 per 1,000 live births. This means that 6.47 per cent of deaths of children under the age of 5 are infants.

**Nutrition<sup>24</sup>**

202. A national document on food security and nutrition was published in 2013, followed by a second national strategy 2012–2016.

203. In 2015, a plan was prepared and approved that aimed to extend the programme for the community-level treatment of acute malnutrition 2015–2018. A nutrition strategy for infants and young children 2015–2025 was likewise drafted and approved. Thanks to these initiatives and to government support to the states, the coverage of community-level services to treat malnutrition – following the provision of therapeutic food – increased to cover 70 per cent of healthcare institutions.

204. The Sudan has been approved as one of 56 countries in a global system intended to accelerate the pace of efforts to improve nutrition. As part of the system, it benefits from the relevant experience of other States. In 2015, it also established the Supreme Council for Food Security and Nutrition, which advocates for food-related engagement in both policy and practice.

205. A total of 150,000 cases of acute malnutrition were treated in 2015, of an annual target of 234,332 cases (67.1 per cent), along with 180,000 cases of acute and moderate malnutrition of an annual target of 111,272 cases. The coverage of treatment for malnutrition in children under 5 increased from 23 per cent to 80 per cent, on average.

206. At the beginning of 2019, as a way of tackling the low rates of use of iodized salt, the government of the state of Red Sea, the Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Ministry of Industry signed the Port Sudan Declaration for the production of high-quality iodized salt.

**7.4 Right to clean water and sanitation**

207. The Sudan is increasingly concerned to provide water and sanitation in all states of the country, to which end a strategic plan to ensure that all Sudanese citizens have access to safe water and adequate sanitation at the national and state levels was drawn up for the period 2012–2016 and is being implemented. The State has made particular efforts in cities where water is scarce, by implementing urgent projects such as building dams and desalination plants and drilling wells. By the beginning of 2015, 70 per cent of the population had access to drinking water (80 per cent in urban areas and 60 per cent in rural areas).

208. Between 2010 and 2014, 345 water harvesting projects were implemented in all states of the Sudan. They included 291 dams and boreholes that harvested 89.3 million cubic meters of rainwater, in addition to 54 other water service projects.

**7.5 Reproductive health rights of adolescent girls and measures to promote their lifestyles****Measures to protect children from substance abuse (art. 33)**

209. Information concerning the well-being of adolescents – including their state of health and their health priorities – remains limited. In 2013, healthcare workers were provided with training in how to respond appropriately to the healthcare demands of adolescents.

210. According to the results of the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey, 87 of every 1,000 births involved a mother aged between 15 and 19 while, according to the latest comparative data for 2012, the average among States of sub-Saharan Africa was 117.8 per 1,000 births.

211. According to a study which covered three of the seven districts in Khartoum, only 17 per cent of young males and 24 per cent of young females had ever heard of reproductive health.

<sup>24</sup> Reports of the Federal Ministry of Health.

212. A review conducted by child welfare councils in the states showed that 28 per cent of young males are or have been smokers, while 36.4 per cent have received information about adolescent health in the past six months. For young females, the rates stood at 6 per cent and 18.2 per cent, respectively.

## **7.6 Social security and healthcare services and facilities (arts. 26 and 18 (3))**

213. The Savings and Social Development Bank has run healthcare-related projects and services that have helped to improve the healthcare environment in a number of states, with funding that amounted to 22 million pounds by the end of 2015.

214. Health insurance coverage has increased from 37.8 per cent to 43 per cent of the total population of the Sudan. The number of participants has reached 15,725,537, a net increase of 1,886,299 or 2.4 per cent with respect to 2015. In addition, service delivery facilities have been expanded and integrated into a healthcare map that reflects the population densities in the various states. A further 144 service points have been added, bringing their total number to 2,003, and 139 pharmacies, bringing their number to 1,751 across all the states of the Sudan. Social insurance covers 2.1 per cent of the working age population, with a total of 352,287 beneficiaries.

215. Within the framework of a project to expand healthcare services, which was mentioned earlier, 237 health units (35 per cent of the target of 684) and 109 family health centres (53 per cent of the target of 205) were built in 15 states in 2015. Those facilities were duly provided with all the necessary equipment and supplies, thus increasing geographical coverage from 68 per cent to 93 per cent of the population.

## **8. Education, recreation and cultural activities (arts. 28 and 31); right to education including vocational training and guidance (art. 28); goals and quality of education (art. 29); cultural rights of children belonging to Indigenous and minority communities (art. 30); human rights education and civic education; rest, play, leisure, free time and cultural and artistic activities (art. 31)**

216. The compulsory and free nature of education has been an integral part of educational policies ever since 1990 when the first conference on such policies produced recommendations which the Government duly adopted. Article 13 of the 2005 Interim Constitution and the Children's Act of 2010 explicitly stipulate that children have the right to compulsory and free education. However, there is still a gap between legislation and practice with regard to free education.

217. The Ministry of Education has adopted a body of strategies to make high-quality education available and accessible to children. These strategies include:

- A strategy to improve the education of nomadic children (2012–2015)
- A special education strategy (2009–2016)
- A strategy for children not enrolled in school (2009–2016) and for the development of education in Darfur (2012–2015).

### **Preschool education**

218. The average annual intake rate to preschool education between 2001 and 2014 amounted to 7 per cent (6.9 per cent for boys and 7.1 per cent for girls).

219. Total actual intake to preschool education went up between 2001 and 2013 from 18.3 per cent to 39.9 per cent for both sexes, increasing from 17.8 per cent to 42.2 per cent for boys and from 18.9 per cent to 45 per cent for girls, over that period.



220. A gap of 10.1 per cent persists between the intake rate and the planned intake rate of 50 per cent. This means that greater efforts are required in order to increase the number of State-run facilities, particularly in rural areas.<sup>25</sup>

221. Most preschool educational facilities are in private hands, with oversight and guidance from ministries of education in the states. In 2001, 90 per cent of pupils in kindergarten were in non-State-run institutions; by 2011 that figure had decreased to 42 per cent as intake at State-run facilities had increased by 58 per cent.

### Primary education

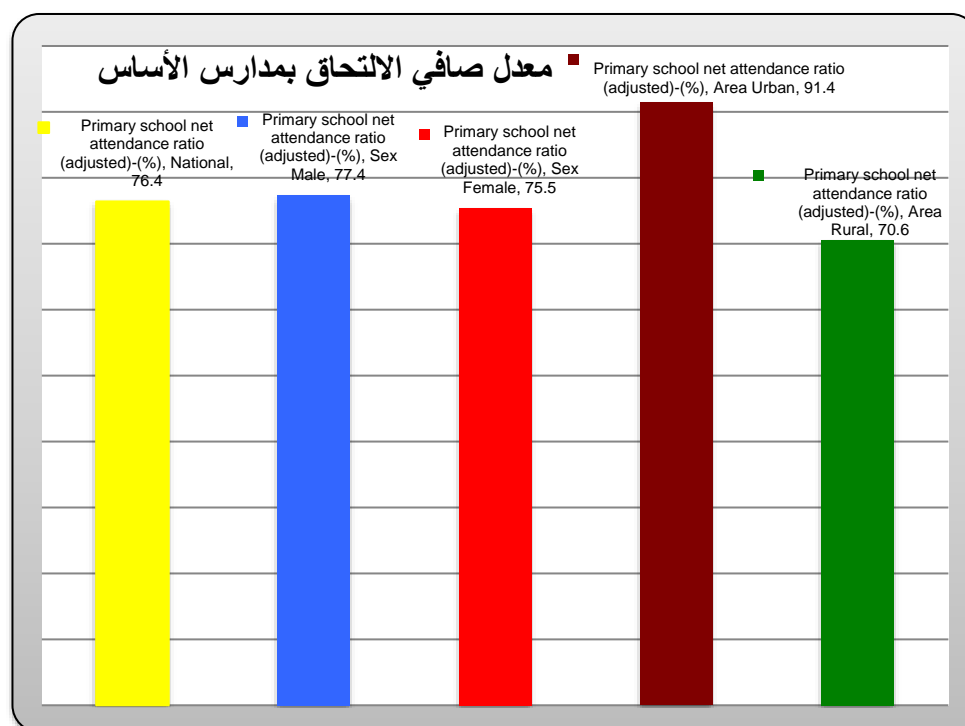
222. The average annual acceptance rate to the first grade of primary education between the academic years of 2000 and 2014 amounted to 3.33 per cent (2.6 per cent for boys and 4 per cent for girls). This shows that the gender gap has persisted for some time despite improved development indicators in favour of girls.

223. The acceptance rate to primary education went up between 2001 and 2014 from 74 per cent to 82.8 per cent for both sexes, increasing from 81.3 per cent to 86 per cent for boys and from 66.8 per cent to 79.5 per cent for girls, over that period.

224. Despite the increase in acceptance, the ambition of reaching 100 per cent by 2015 remains unfulfilled as there is persistent gap of 17.2 per cent. This is due to the growth of the country and the inability of certain districts to fulfil primary educational needs as a result of limited resources and the outbreak of conflicts in some areas. Added to this are certain social and cultural factors in rural and remote areas.

225. There is some difficulty in calculating net attendance indicators due to a lack of data about the ages of students which in turn is due to the fact that some of them do not have birth certificates, especially in rural and remote areas. Also, there is a lack of school-level databases in the form of cumulative school records. The 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey came up with the net attendance indicators shown in figure 3.

Figure 3  
Net attendance rates in primary school



Source: Multiple indicator cluster survey, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> National report on the evaluation of goals in education 2000–2015, Ministry of Education.

### Secondary education

226. The average intake to secondary education between the academic years of 2000 and 2013 amounted to 5.1 per cent for boys, 3.8 per cent for girls and 4.4 per cent for both sexes.

227. Between 2001 and 2013, total actual intake went up from 24.1 per cent to 37.1 per cent for both sexes, increasing from 22.7 per cent to 37.5 per cent for boys and from 25.7 per cent to 36.6 per cent for girls.

### Technical education<sup>26</sup>

228. Technical education is considered to be the second part of secondary education, and the proportion of students who benefited therefore ranged from 6.7 per cent in 2001 to 3.3 per cent in 2011.

229. Technical education is beset by certain problems such as a lack of funding, especially for workshops and for practical training in industrial and agricultural schools, and the limited connections between those institutions and the labour market and the private sector.

230. Certain features can be extracted from past experience, including: The absence of the technical mindset in the community at large, a lack of focus on this kind of education in broader policy and a lack of clarity in determining the quantitative and qualitative needs of the market.

### Education for girls

231. Reports from UNICEF show that the girl's education programme arose from studies and research into the reasons that, since the 1990s, had been preventing girls in certain regions from attending school, including, inter alia, a study into the socioeconomic factors affecting girls' schooling. A round table was organized which identified certain fundamental starting points, such as expanding primary education with a focus on girls, raising awareness about the importance of girls' education, use of the media, finding alternative ways to provide educational opportunities for girls outside school (training for adolescents) and securing sources of funding.

### School dropout

232. According to the aforementioned reports, 44,821 children aged between 6 and 13 who had dropped out of school enrolled in primary education via the accelerated education programme. More than 10,800 school children (52 per cent of them girls) in 76 children's clubs were instructed in knowledge and skills to promote the involvement of girls and to improve school health, personal hygiene and peaceful coexistence; they were also imbued with life skills and taught environmental stewardship in schools. In addition to this, 80 trainers in early childhood development in the state of Blue Nile received additional training to increase their capacity to deliver effective services in the context of preschool education.

233. A programme has been established that aims to train and qualify adolescents within their own local environments. The initiative offers flexible education and targets youngsters aged between 9 and 14 who either never enrolled in school or who enrolled then subsequently dropped out without completing. Sixty per cent of the target group are girls. In all, 188,666 adolescents have benefited from the initiative: 39,750 boys and 148,916 girls, with a gender parity index of 3.7 in favour of girls. There are 5,042 centres staffed by 6,021 volunteers of both sexes. University graduates have been deployed to teach illiteracy classes in lieu of military service after undergoing special training. The measure has had a positive impact on expanding illiteracy classes.

### Child-friendly schools

234. Capacity-building activities have been run to illustrate the standards applicable to child-friendly schools; the initiative was aimed at increasing the know-how and skills of

<sup>26</sup> National report on the evaluation of goals in education 2000–2015, Ministry of Education.

10,768 teachers, 320 school principals, 120 educational counsellors and 20 inspectors. In the same context, 3,600 children (48 per cent of them girls) were taught how to improve the school environment. Thirty-two educational units for girls were established using child-friendly school standards, each consisting of two classrooms and an office, with appropriate water and sanitation. Training courses were also organized for 180 members of 26 mother/daughter groups to draw their attention to the benefits of educating girls and participating in the management of schools.

### **Primary school**

235. The primary education sector has benefited from help and support provided by United Nations agencies and other organizations, banks and funds. This has contributed to the development and continuity of education, especially in remote areas. The largest donor to primary education programmes in the Sudan is UNICEF, which aims to increase intake rates and improve retention rates at child-friendly schools in nine states (Blue Nile, Kassala, Gedaref, greater Kordofan and greater Darfur), to integrate and promote a culture of peace, to protect against AIDS and to achieve human rights and equality in education.

236. A total of 254,793 children in conflict-affected areas benefited from education-related services, and have been able to receive quality education thanks to the construction and renovation of 253 school facilities and the provision of appropriate teaching materials.

237. Education, both ordinary and higher, is one of the largest sectors that receives support from UNESCO. Significant projects include training for persons who work in the field of educational planning, establishing early childhood development centres, training primary school teachers (4 courses) and developing literacy programmes.

238. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, UNFPA helps to fund demographic education programmes as part of public education, both formal and non-formal. This has led to the inclusion of concepts relating to demographic education into primary school curricula.

### **Private education<sup>27</sup>**

239. Despite the spread of private primary schools, only 4 per cent of children of both sexes attended such schools in 2016, as compared to 3.9 per cent. Such schools are to be found above all in urban areas. The advantages of private education are that it provides a better learning environment, has the ability to attract the most gifted teachers and, in the larger cities, has led to the introduction of language teaching in some kindergartens.

240. Despite the increase in non-State-funded education, the private sector has been reluctant to invest in primary education, preferring to focus on secondary education. Added to this is the increasing desire of parents to provide their children with high-quality education, especially in large cities. The challenge facing private education lies in the fact that the fees are high and increasing.

### **Vocational education**

241. Vocational or professional education is intended for children who have completed primary school. The curriculum for vocational education includes 9 per cent general culture, 21 per cent vocational culture and 70 per cent practical application. The course lasts for two or three years depending upon the area of specialization (cars, electricity, plumbing, welding, refrigeration and air conditioning or textiles and carpets).

242. The Ministry of Education runs 28 vocational education institutes distributed across different states of the Sudan. They are attended by 4,289 students of both sectors, who represent 0.6 per cent of all secondary level students. There are also institutes attached to other ministries but no data is available in that regard.

243. The needs of the institutes include a revision of curricula, more teacher training, improvements to the school environment and closer ties to the labour market.

<sup>27</sup> National report on the evaluation of goals in education 2000–2015, Ministry of Education.

## 9. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)–(d) and 38–40)

### 9.1 Refugee children seeking protection (art. 22)

244. The Government of the Sudan remains committed to all international and regional treaties and conventions on refugees and asylum-seekers. The Sudan promulgated the Refugee Regulation Act of 2014, which replaced the Refugee Act of 1974 and is consistent with international and regional instruments on refugees and asylum-seekers. The 2014 Refugee Act stipulates that the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers are to be protected and that they may not be transported outside their camps without authorization. Table 11 shows the estimated numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, while table 12 shows the number of child refugees and asylum-seekers.<sup>28</sup>

Table 11  
Estimated numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers

<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Total</i>
South Sudan	352 740
Eritrea	125 540
Ethiopia	20 720
Syria (children only)	5 497
Democratic Republic of the Congo (asylum-seekers)	990
Central African Republic	2 430
Chad	37 780
<b>Total</b>	<b>545 697</b>

*Source:* Commission for Refugees and Humanitarian Aid Commission, December 2015.

Table 12  
Child refugees and asylum-seekers (same source as above)

<i>Year registered</i>	<i>Number of child refugees</i>
2013	2 090
2014	2 681
2015	445
March 2016	20

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Commission for Refugees, Ministry of the Interior.

**A capacity-building initiative in the state of Khartoum for children who live and work in street situations**

The state of Khartoum has organized a training programme on how to deal with children who live and work in street situations. The initiative was aimed at 200 police officers working for the departments for the protection of families and children, plus 50 juvenile court judges, prosecutors, social workers, psychiatrists and members of civil society organizations who work with children. The programme, which extended over two and a half years (2012–2013), was divided into 24 sessions each attended by around 30 participants from those mentioned above, and each session ended with a plan of action drafted and approved by the participants themselves. The training programme was funded by UNICEF with technical support from a British-run safety and access to justice programme, which works with the Sudan Police in a number of activities. The purpose of the training was to coalesce the efforts made by the authorities to address and resolve the problems such children face, through effective planning and implementation. The training also involved the examination and practical application of legalistic matters related to the children's situation. The trainees put forward a document containing a working methodology wherewith to establish a single unified mechanism for dealing with such children. The document – which draws on the social welfare strategy – sets forth the roles and responsibilities of partners, establishes indicators and identifies monitoring and evaluation procedures for the activities envisaged to achieve the planned goals. The document was adopted by participants in a consultative workshop attended by more than 35 institutions from government, United Nations agencies, international NGOs, civil society organizations and the media.

245. In the context of a programme of the Ministry of Education regulating school curricula, the Commission for Refugees has established schools in refugee camps. In cooperation with UNHCR, the Commission meets education-related requirements such as buildings, school furniture, textbooks and teachers.

246. Statistics show that there were 1,148 Eritrean child refugees of both sexes in schools in 2014 (5,912 boys and 5,571 girls) in the eastern States.

247. In 2008, a charity organization began building a special centre for unaccompanied refugee children. This centre was then taken up by the Commission for Refugees and UNHCR and, according to 2013 statistics, it holds 1,051 unaccompanied children.

248. A 2011 report on the situation of refugee children in Sudan illustrates the steps taken to protect children seeking refugee status from any form of abuse or ill-treatment. The children are provided with primary health care, free birth registration, the issuance of birth certificates free of charge, preventive healthcare (vaccination and clean environments), supplementary nutrition, free education, clean drinking water and security services, as well as special shelters for unaccompanied refugee children.

249. According to a child protection report prepared by UNHCR with the Ministry of Social Development in the state of Khartoum and the Commission for Refugees, 32 children were reunited with their families via the reunification programme in 2016.

## 9.2 Children from minorities or Indigenous groups (art. 30)

250. Article 47 of the 2005 Interim Constitution stipulates that all ethnic and cultural communities within the population have the right to express and develop their particular cultures. There is to be no discrimination of any kind against any cultural or ethnic group in the Sudan. All persons are equal before the law and are provided with the same services in all states of the Sudan.

## 9.3 Children in street situations

251. A national policy to address the phenomenon of child vagrancy was rolled out in 2009. Its strategic purpose is to improve the health and the economic, social and mental well-being of the target group and to enable them to integrate into their communities and families. The strategy seeks to address both the preventive and the practical aspects of the problem, in coordination with official and voluntary mechanisms and institutions at the national level.

252. The state of Khartoum has adopted the approach taken by the state of South Kordofan to protect street children, setting up a robust social welfare system that responds to the needs of vulnerable children in districts and administrative units. The initiative began in the state of South Kordofan in January 2008 and, profiting from that experience, was taken up by the state of Khartoum in January 2010. An accurate and up-to-date database was established to record the numbers of children separated from (or reunited with) their families. The system, which is very broad-ranging has been designed to respond to any emergency situation, such as displacement, etc.<sup>29</sup>

253. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Development in the state of Khartoum in 2012, there are 2,500 children living and working in street situations in Khartoum. Like other global capitals, Khartoum is home to a large number of street children.

254. The Federal Ministry of Welfare and Social Security provides support for children in street situations at three centres in Khartoum. The centres provide temporary shelter, healthcare services and psychosocial support, and they help to reunite the children with their families. The centres also provide simple life skills training and recreational activities. One centre is dedicated to girls.

## 9.4 Children who have suffered exploitation and the steps taken for their physical and mental recovery and reintegration

255. Police officers responsible for protecting children and families, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, community protection committees, child protection networks and certain voluntary organizations (especially in areas of armed conflict) all play an essential role in this regard. They use referral procedures to provide services aimed at promoting physical and mental recovery and reintegration. In addition, a monitoring system is in place run by ministries of social welfare at the national and state levels.

256. Between 2014 and 2015, around 800 professional departmental staff received training on standard operating procedures and on referrals outside the court system, in the following states: Northern, River Nile, Kassala, Red Sea, Gedaref, Darfur and Kordofan.

## 9.5 Economic exploitation and child labour (art. 32)

257. According to the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey, 24.9 per cent of children aged between 5 and 17 were involved in some form of child labour.

258. The Labour Code of 2007 contains provisions for the protection of children, with article 21 defining the age at which it is permissible for children to engage in work and setting forth the conditions regulating their employment. The Children's Act of 2010 also addresses

<sup>29</sup> In South Kordofan the initiative has been hampered by the renewal of armed conflicts.

the subject of child labour and prohibits the employment of children under the age of 18 in hazardous jobs. A regulation governing child labour has been drafted and is in the process of being approved, which identifies the jobs in which it is prohibited to employ the children. Moreover, in October 2014, an announcement was made concerning a high-level coordination mechanism to oversee the implementation of international legal standards on child labour.

## 9.6 Administration of juvenile justice (art. 40)

### Juvenile offenders, victims and witnesses, and juvenile justice

259. Article 68 (1) of the 2010 Children's Act prohibits any form of criminal proceedings against children aged between 7 and 12 who are at risk of delinquency. Moreover, no sentence of death has been carried out since the Children's Act was promulgated. In that regard, the Constitutional Court has issued rulings reinforcing the prohibition of the death penalty against children (see the section concerning the definition of the child). The Act, moreover, sets the age of criminal responsibility at 12.

260. A number of lawyers from the Bar Association volunteer in the departments for the protection of families and children<sup>30</sup> and the Ministry of Justice to provide legal support to children accused of serious crimes.<sup>31</sup> A special section of the Ministry of Justice also provides legal aid for children. Such assistance is available in all cases involving children.

261. A regulation concerning the supervision of children within the community is currently in force and a further two regulations are being drafted, one concerning restorative justice and the other community service. The regulation on community supervision envisages specific pretrial alternatives to detention by placing the children concerned under probation (i.e., a social supervisor responsible for monitoring the behaviour of a child on early release, or a person qualified and able to take care of the child).

262. Child victims, witnesses and offenders receive support from the departments for the protection of families and children, which operate in all states. In fact, departmental units are now present in 18 states and 56 districts, and all children – including children in conflict zones – have access to the departments. The Sudan is currently examining the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

263. There are two distinct alternatives to the pretrial or post-trial detention of juveniles. These alternatives, which are set forth in the Children's Act, are: release under police caution, precautionary release or early (conditional) release. Article 75 (2) of the Act invests social services bureaux with the responsibility to support such children, as an alternative to subjecting them to formal court proceedings. The Act envisions alternatives to pretrial detention as a general principle, and this approach is upheld in article 5 (2) (1) of the Act, according to which trial proceedings against children in conflict with the law are to be conducted "with a view to their social rehabilitation".

264. Tables 13, 14 and 15 give data gathered from police departments for the protection of families and children regarding the number of children who had contact with the law in different states of the Sudan in 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Administrative data from departments for the protection of families and children (November 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Reports of the National Council for Child Welfare, October 2015.

Table 13  
**Juvenile offenders who were referred outside the justice system**

<i>State</i>	<i>Juvenile offenders</i>					
	<i>Cases involving juvenile offenders</i>			<i>Children aged 12 to 18 referred outside the justice system</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Blue Nile	296	48	344	121	20	141
River Nile	196	28	224	0	0	0
Kassala	43	3	46	20	3	23
Gedaref	351	39	390	82	9	91
Al-Gazira	750	146	396	53	28	81
Sennar	55	7	62	48	9	57
South Darfur	172	129	301	7	2	9
East Darfur	131	19	150	25	12	37
West Darfur	77	22	99	41	18	59
Central Darfur	50	19	69	9	6	15
North Darfur	220	49	269	0	0	0
South Kordofan	70	20	90	24	0	24
North Kordofan	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Kordofan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern	176	30	206	30	9	39
White Nile	459	143	602	82	47	129
Red Sea	179	36	215	46	18	64
Khartoum	4 309	362	4671	1 098	389	1 587
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 534</b>	<b>1 100</b>	<b>8 634</b>	<b>1 785</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>2 356</b>

Table 14  
**Child victims of non-sexual offences**

<i>State</i>	<i>Child victims of non-sexual offences</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Blue Nile	231	116	347
River Nile	85	32	117
Kassala	25	3	28
Gedaref	254	69	323
Al-Gazira	555	219	774
Sennar	30	26	56
South Darfur	97	80	177
East Darfur	147	33	180
West Darfur	67	35	102
Central Darfur	89	42	131
North Darfur	151	81	232
South Kordofan	11	5	16
North Kordofan	0	0	0
West Kordofan	0	0	0
Northern	150	37	187
White Nile	306	162	468



<i>Child victims of non-sexual offences</i>			
<i>State</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Red Sea	18	9	27
Khartoum	3 779	605	4 384
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 995</b>	<b>1 554</b>	<b>7 549</b>

Table 15  
**Children involved in sexual offences (offenders and victims)**

<i>States</i>	<i>Sexual offences</i>								
	<i>Offenders</i>						<i>Victims</i>		
	<i>Age 7–12</i>			<i>Age 12–18</i>			<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>			
Blue Nile	10	7	10	45	5	50	55	5	60
River Nile	0	82	0	7	0	7	7	0	7
Kassala	4	49	6	3	0	3	7	2	9
Gedaref	4	16	8	78	0	78	82	4	86
Al-Gazira	0	111	0	49	1	50	49	1	50
Sennar	0	34	0	16	1	17	16	1	17
South Darfur	55	20	99	56	43	99	111	87	198
East Darfur	23	18	25	11	0	38	34	2	63
West Darfur	4	30	5	16	3	19	20	4	24
Central Darfur	3	4	3	15	2	17	18	2	20
North Darfur	4	0	4	26	1	27	30	1	31
South Kordofan	1	0	1	3	0	3	4	0	4
North Kordofan	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Kordofan	0	133	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern	0	0	0	23	2	25	23	2	25
White Nile	53	33	86	80	33	113	133	66	199
Red Sea	4	6	10	19	16	35	23	22	45
Khartoum	480	4	484	385	2	387	865	6	871
<b>Total</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>1 477</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>1 682</b>

## 9.7. Support for victims and protection measures

265. As concerns protection in general, article 5 (2) (k) and (l) of the Children's Act is intended to protect children of either sex from all forms of violence, harm, inhuman treatment, physical, moral or sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation. If children violate criminal law or are charged with or convicted of a criminal offence (whether as offenders or as children at risk of delinquency) they have the right to be treated as follows:

- In a manner consistent with their sense of dignity and worth.
- As innocent until proven guilty.
- On the basis that the purpose of the trial is social reintegration.

- On the basis that they incur no criminal liability before reaching the age of 18 but are to be subjected to care and correctional measures.
- Article 5 (2) (m), (n) and (o) of the Children’s Act of 2010 envisages a partnership between the family, the community and the State for the proper upbringing of children, in which childcare is seen as a human, religious and social duty, and custody as a parental obligation.
- Awareness-raising sessions have been held in semi-urban areas. The sessions target women and focus on protection measures against violence and other risks, as well as training young persons on measures to defend themselves. An “open theatre” project aims to provide children with information. Article 5 (2) (p) of the Children’s Act states that child vagrancy is not to be treated as a crime and stipulates that the State is to seek to defuse potential causes of vagrancy and to remedy those that already exist.

266. About how to protect themselves against – and how to report – violence and abuse. Training has also been provided to families in project management and microfinance. This serves to support poor families and helps them supplement their income so that they can provide for their needs and help their children continue their education and avoid child labour. Women and families in local communities also received training in income-generating activities.

## 9.8 Government efforts to prevent human trafficking

267. Bilateral agreements were signed in 2014 with a number of neighbouring States, including some that had signed the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Moreover, according to a report of the National Council for Child Welfare, training on trafficking in children has been provided to police officers, prosecutors in juvenile courts, social workers and judges.

268. Acting under the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2014, the Council of Ministers issued its Decree No. 2014/187 dated 30 April 2014 for the formation of a national committee to combat human trafficking. The committee is led by the Undersecretary at the Ministry of Justice and its members include representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Human Resources Development, the Ministry of Health, the Agency for Sudanese Workers Abroad, the Advisory Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Child Welfare and the National Intelligence and Security Service. The committee’s job is to coordinate efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including children, and to develop and support bilateral cooperation among neighbouring countries and at the regional and international levels.

## 9.9 Children in armed conflicts (art. 38) including their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

269. The Children’s Act, the Armed Forces Act and the Police Act all prohibit the recruitment of anyone under the age of 18. To do so is a criminal offence the penalties for which are stipulated in those laws.

270. The National Council for Child Welfare, in cooperation with the child rights unit at the Ministry of Defence, has held several training courses for officers and enlisted personnel in the armed forces on the rights and protection of children in armed conflicts. This is in addition to training courses for the Sudanese-Chadian joint border security forces on child rights and the transboundary protection of children.

271. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission has embraced the concept of comprehensive community-based reintegration for children who were recruited by armed groups. This approach – which consists in psychosocial support, awareness-raising and explaining the impact of recruitment among the children’s communities of origin – has

been followed in all areas where children have been demobilized, in Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Port Sudan, and El Geneina.<sup>32</sup> The details are set forth below in table 16.

Table 16

**Number of children who were reintegrated thanks to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme**

<i>State</i>	<i>Children registered</i>	<i>Year of registration</i>	<i>Children reintegrated</i>
North Darfur	262	2009, 2010, 2013	204
South Darfur	888	2010, 2013, 2015	250
West Darfur	381	2008, 2010, 2011	210
South Kordofan	290	2007, 2012	195
Blue Nile	483	2008, 2010, 2011	94
Kassala	235	2007	235
Red Sea	39	2007	39
Gedaref	33	2007	33
Khartoum	32	2007, 2012	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 643</b>		<b>1 292</b>

## 10. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

### 10.1. Legislation

272. The Sudan ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2014.

273. Human trafficking is prohibited under the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2014, and steps are currently being taken to integrate a proposed new section into the Act concerning the crime of trafficking in children. Trafficking in children is also prohibited under the Children's Act of 2010, which criminalizes the exploitation of children, and under the Interim Constitution which stipulates: "The State is to protect the rights of the child as set forth in the international and regional treaties that the Sudan has ratified."

274. Children are duly protected under existing laws, which envisage terms of imprisonment of between 5 and 20 years, and even the death penalty if the victim is a child, a woman or a person with disabilities or (in serious trafficking cases) if the victim dies. These penalties are equivalent to those for other serious crimes, such as rape.

275. Several provisions in the Children's Act of 2010 address matters raised in the Protocol:

- Printed materials and artistic or audiovisual compositions that address the baser instincts of children are mentioned in article 33 of the Act. The concomitant penalties, set forth in article 86 (c), are a term of imprisonment of 6 months and or a fine.
- As concerns the offence of sexual harassment or abuse against children, anyone who produces, distributes, exports, imports, displays, sells or possesses child pornography; uses any child, with or without remuneration, in real or simulated explicit sexual activities; depicts a child's organs to arouse sexual desire; uses children in the slave trade; or exploits them in forced labour is liable to a term of imprisonment of up to 15 years and a fine (art. 86 (g)).

<sup>32</sup> Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission.

- The abduction and sale of children or the transplantation of their organs is criminalized under article 45 (a) of the Act and, under article 86 (e), is punishable by death or by a term of imprisonment of up to 20 years, as well as a fine. The rape of a child is defined as a crime under article 45 (b) and, under article 86 (b), is punishable by death or by a term of imprisonment of up to 20 years, as well as a fine.
- A number of pieces of Sudanese legislation include provisions covering immunities. Immunities are a privilege that does not eliminate or abolish a crime or serve to obviate the consequent penalty, but that prevent criminal and sometimes civil proceedings from being taken against persons covered by the immunity, unless permission is first obtained from a body specified by law. Article 35 of the 1991 Code of Criminal Procedure states that criminal proceedings may not be opened without the permission of a prosecutor in the following cases:
  1. Offences for which an arrest may be effected without a warrant
  2. Offences involving a public servant

Or without the permission of the competent authority in the following cases:

1. Offences that pervert the course of justice
2. Offences in which a waiver may be presented only by the rightsholders or their representative
3. Offences in which a law stipulates a requirement for authorization from an entity that enjoys procedural or substantive immunity, unless otherwise provided for in that law.

## 10.2 Measures

276. A study that monitored and evaluated child protection in the Sudan (mentioned earlier) showed that community activities and informal networks have helped to establish a protective environment for children in the country. This has come about thanks to the work of community-based child protection networks, women's networks and child welfare networks, as well as children's clubs such those in North Darfur where, in 2013, there were around 155 such clubs distributed state-wide.

277. There are State-run safe houses in Kassala, where victims of human trafficking can receive shelter, medical treatment and psychological support. In March 2015, those shelters were holding 17 persons, most of them victims of human trafficking. There are also other safe houses, run by civil society organizations, that help victims of human trafficking.

278. One of the measures taken to combat trafficking in persons has been the establishment of prosecution offices specializing in trafficking offences, in the eastern states of the Sudan bordering on Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and South Sudan. In the years 2014 and 2015, there were 213 criminal cases involving trafficking in persons in the eastern states of the Sudan and 26 such cases in the state of Khartoum of which 10 were referred to the courts. A number of cases were dealt with in coordination with the relevant authorities such as the Commission for Refugees, which is part of the Ministry of the Interior, and IOM. In all, 614 cases of trafficking victims of various nationalities were handled<sup>33</sup> and persons holding asylum cards were sent back to refugee camps in the Sudan.

279. In coordination with IOM, a regional ministerial conference on the trafficking and smuggling of persons in the Horn of Africa was held in Khartoum from 13 to 16 October 2014. One of the outcomes of the conference was the Khartoum Declaration, which was adopted at the Rome Conference at the end of 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Reports of the National Council for Child Welfare.

## 11. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict

### 11.1 Legislation

280. Under the Armed Forces Act of 2007, as amended in 2013, it is prohibited to recruit children into the armed forces. The Act states that it is prohibited for persons “under the age of 18 to join the armed forces”. Operating under this Act, the child rights unit of the Sudanese armed forces works to protect children and prevent them from being recruited.

281. The Children’s Act of 2010 defines and reinforces the prohibition on the recruitment of children, under the conditions set forth in the Armed Forces Act. The Act includes provision for a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for children.

### 11.2 Measures

282. The 2008 national strategy for the reintegration of child soldiers was developed as a framework for efforts to prevent the recruitment of persons under the legal age. This strategy was then further developed under the Sudanese Government’s Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and UNICEF. The objectives of the strategy are as follows:

- To support demobilization in a way that facilitates the successful reintegration of children, also by promoting effective investigations, awareness-raising, family tracing, reunification and alternative care arrangements.
- To strengthen social work mechanisms for child returnees who were associated with armed groups; in fact, regular follow up can help children reintegrate with families and communities, and facilitate their access to the services they need.

283. Support has been provided for the implementation of comprehensive reintegration projects for children who were associated with armed groups or otherwise affected. This includes psychosocial support, formal and informal education and training in skills that will enable them to gain a livelihood.<sup>34</sup>

284. Child-friendly spaces were established in 2004 by international and national agencies in response to the mass displacement caused by the conflict in Darfur. The spaces offer a safe and participatory environment for war-affected children and integrated programmes that involve play, recreation, education, healthcare and psychology. The spaces – which build on existing community structures and capacities – are inclusive, non-discriminatory and temporary, and are sometimes set up in tents. Around 300 child-friendly spaces have been created in conflict-affected states, including Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

285. In all, 90,000 children in emergency and humanitarian situations have benefited from child-friendly/temporary learning spaces and from psychosocial support in schools.

286. The interagency “subsector on child protection in humanitarian settings” has developed a specific framework for minimum standards in child-friendly spaces, in line with international standards. This is an important initiative, but its impact on quality of service remains limited because those standards have not yet been rolled out more generally. Moreover, the standards cover the physical environment of child-friendly spaces rather than existing activities and their proper application.<sup>35</sup>

287. In the first half of 2015, prevention and response services were provided to 239,174 child victims of violence and exploitation in areas affected by conflict and displacement, in 72 districts across the states of the Sudan. In addition, and 84,450 needy

<sup>34</sup> Review of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for children in Darfur, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> National Council for Child Welfare, UNICEF and Ahfad University for Women, *Study on psychosocial support in child-friendly spaces*, 2014.

children (41,788 boys and 42,662 girls) in 51 districts in 10 conflict-affected states were accommodated in child-friendly centres and received psychological support services.

288. Officers and enlisted personnel in the Sudanese armed forces are being given training on the protection of children in armed conflicts, as illustrated in table 17.

Table 17

**Training courses on the protection of children in armed conflicts provided to officers and enlisted personnel in the Sudanese armed forces**

<i>Location of course</i>	<i>No. of beneficiaries</i>	<i>Date</i>
Directorate General of the Military Judiciary	52	June 2014
West Darfur	62	August 2014
	67	
Central Darfur	59	September 2014
	59	October 2014
South Darfur	31	August 2014
	28	September 2014
Blue Nile	43	December 2015
North Darfur	40	March 2016

**Joint action plan with the United Nations to protect children in areas of armed conflict**

289. In March 2016, the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the United Nations signed a joint action plan for the protection of children in areas of armed conflict. The signing took place in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, a representative from the National Intelligence and Security Service, representatives from United Nations organizations in Sudan and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Also present at the signing were state-level ministers for social welfare and secretaries of child welfare councils in conflict-affected states.

290. The plan, which entered into force on the date it was signed, is based on the 11 Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, as well as on several relevant regional and international conventions and treaties.

291. The overall purpose of the plan is to protect children affected by armed conflict – in particular, to protect them against recruitment or use in armed conflict – and to rehabilitate and reintegrate such children. In addition to this, the Government of the Sudan is taking all possible measures to enhance overall protection for children who have been affected by armed conflict. This includes stopping child recruitment and securing the release of children within sovereign territory.

292. The President of the Republic duly issued Decree No. 89 of 2016 for the formation of a high-level committee to monitor the preparation and implementation of the joint action plan. The membership of the committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and the Ministry of Education, a representative from the National Intelligence and Security Service, the secretary of the National Council for Child Welfare and representatives of the United Nations in the Sudan. The President also issued a further decree for the formation of a technical committee to follow up on the implementation of the plan, to be headed by the National Council for Child Welfare and with members from all the competent authorities. The committees hold regular meetings to coordinate and review the status of implementation of the plan. In addition, other state-level decrees were issued for the formation of executive committees to implement and follow up on the plan in states and districts.

293. The armed forces, the police and the security services have also issued orders and procedures for the implementation of the plan at all levels.

### **Knowledge, attitudes and practices study on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict**

294. The National Council for Child Welfare collaborated with UNICEF to conduct a study on knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The study, which took place in December 2015, was conducted in five states in the Sudan that are affected by armed conflict and tribal issues: Blue Nile, South Kordofan, West Kordofan, North Darfur and South Darfur.

295. According to the study, the reasons for the recruitment of children by armed groups are related to the groups' need for persons to act as combatants and to undertake other tasks in military encampments. There are also other reasons, related to the children, their families and communities, as well as cultural and environmental reasons.

296. The study came up with a list of proposed interventions that might help improve child protection and stop the recruitment and use of children by armed groups in the Sudan. On the basis of the study, a media campaign will be designed with the aim of changing perceptions, knowledge, attitudes and practices in communities where children are at risk of being drawn into armed conflicts.

#### **Returning child victims of forced recruitment to their families and communities**

An attack by illegal armed movements on Fanga and Qawz Dengo in Darfur was repelled by government forces who then managed to free 21 children under the age of 18 who had been involved in the attack and who – following inquiries and a medical examination – were found to be victims of exploitation, abduction and forced recruitment.

The prosecutor for crimes in Darfur followed all legal procedures and notified the National Council for Child Welfare, which monitored the situation until a presidential pardon for the children could be issued. That pardon – No. 864 dated 3 October 2016 – stipulated that the children were to be given psychosocial and medical care, in accordance with the standards and procedures followed in such cases, while they were residing at the National Centre for Transitional Care under the supervision of the National Council for Child Welfare. They were then handed over to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission whence they were integrated back into their families and communities.