



المجموعة السودانية للديمقراطية أولاً
Sudan Democracy First Group



Strategy Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG) was established by a number of Sudanese Civil Society leaders, activists and academics in 2010 in Khartoum and Juba. The establishment of SDFG was particularly spurred by the failure of a democratic transformation in Sudan which became acutely apparent during the April 2010 national elections, held as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Against the background of growing instability—caused by reoccurrence of conflict, lack of justice and accountability, and exclusion—SDFG emerged. Its aim was to provide a voice to the voiceless, and to promote democracy in its intersection with peace, justice, and balanced development.

SDFG is a coalition of Sudanese democrats, activists, trade unionists and academics representing different pro-democracy ideological, political and cultural backgrounds. The main agenda of the initiative is to voice the concerns of voiceless Sudanese people across the country around questions of democratization and its intersection with peace, justice and development in Sudan.

SDFG is a civil society actor and think-tank, which engages in politics from an independent position to support efforts around evolving democracy in Sudan. SDFG's work is rooted in a progressive vision, collaborating to establish a Sudanese civic movement to achieve the goals of a just peace, democratic transformation and balanced development. SDFG engages directly in political processes aiming to seek positive societal and political change. SDFG operates from a non-partisan position, and does not attempt to seek political power.

SDFG'S VISION

SDFG's vision is a democratic, inclusive Sudan where justice, equality, peace and development prevail.

SDFG'S MISSION

SDFG considers the promotion of inclusive democracy in Sudan its main mission. As part of this, SDFG is committed to work against marginalization (whether based on culture, ethnicity, class, gender, region, age, religion, or political affiliation) by providing platforms for inclusive and transparent engagement of all Sudanese citizens in political decision making and their participation and expression in the public sphere. SDFG's interventions are guided by the values of transparency, accountability and credibility.

CURRENT CONTENT ANALYSIS

The challenges facing Sudan range from a deteriorating economic situation, to a fluid political scene which is dominated by oppression and use of violence by the state. This fragile security environment manifests itself in multiple civil wars and human rights violations, in parallel to fueling the rise of radicalization and orthodox interpretations of Islam.

The last five years have witnessed the emergence of new movements for democratic change which have fostered the creation of political and civic alliances, youth movements and other stakeholders. These movements have drawn on international solidarity to increasingly resist corruption, nepotism, political oppression, unemployment and economic and humanitarian crises, and to challenge the current status quo. These movements reached their peak in the uprising of September 2013.

Following the bloody repression of that uprising, the regime began to engage in a process to manufacture a false image of peace and stability in Sudan. Political oppression, human rights violations, crackdown on civil society, and multiple wars between the center and the peripheries, along with the rise of fundamental Islam, constituted the real story. This campaign to distort the reality of Sudan's political struggle posed a new layer of challenges to the civic forces, democratic voices and actors for change.

For ordinary Sudanese people, the increasingly acute economic crisis in Sudan continues to represent a major day to day problem. Historically, post-independence, the Sudanese economy had featured structural deformities that manifested in uneven development, lack of production and increased dependence on external markets. The 'Ingaz' economic liberation policies which were introduced in the early nineties aggravated the impact of these policies by ignoring their social impact.

Even today, conventional macro-economic indicators disguise elusive inequalities across class, gender, geographic and ethnic lines in terms of human development indicators. Economic injustices are well entrenched by an exclusive political system. As recent research shows, elections and the democratic experience in Sudan has not been inclusive, not only because of conflicts which have constrained full participation but also because of structural aspects such as unequal development, wealth sharing, resources management and spread of corruption. Furthermore, after the independence of South Sudan and the loss of the oil revenue which was the main source of national income, Sudan's economy entered another era of collapse, for which other economic activities like agriculture and industry were already ignored and destroyed. Corruption and political favoritism prevented other natural resources

—particularly gold- to contribute as source for development. In its quest for easy profit without care for the strategic impact of its policies, the regime privileged leasing Sudanese lands for very long periods to foreign investors. Recently, the regime achieved some progress in easing US economic sanctions. In the absence of a national political and economic project that is bringing Sudanese stakeholders together, this lift of sanctions will benefit the economic growth of a small circle of elites around the regime.

The economic situation together with the unstable political dynamics and ongoing conflicts has given rise to the domination of a war economy, especially in the peripheries. The proliferation of militias and their increasing power and authority (including in terms of control of economic resources) in places like Darfur is a clear example for this. Joining para formal militias became the only income generating activity for youth in these underdeveloped areas. Militias control economic activities such as gold mining in addition to other economic benefits by the government to fund themselves. This has fostered the spread of wars and created war lords whose existence depends on cycles of violence.

Civil wars on three fronts (Blue Nile, South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains, and Darfur) continue to convulse Sudan. These ongoing wars have their historical origins in the absence of balanced development in the peripheries, exclusion from popular participation, and ethnic and religious discrimination. These are structural flaws in the political equation upon which the Sudanese state was established and developed: constant civil war are their primary manifestation. The resulting humanitarian crises have plunged civilian populations into increasing hardship, racism and repression, and led to the rise of ethno-politicization and division.

In an attempt to avoid the costs to its own power of genuine democratic transformation which is needed to address the root causes of the civil wars, the NCP proposes piecemeal deals and region-specific solutions. Bolstering this policy is the ruling party's fostering of an ethnically and religiously divisive discourse and encouragement of divide and rule tactics. The question of war in Sudan needs a comprehensive answer that addresses the gaps in the basic political equation of the Sudanese state. Wars embody the failure of this equation to accommodate the political and development demands of rural peripheries. The current proliferation of para governmental militias —such as the Rapid Support Forces in Darfur (established on the basis of tribe/ethnicity) is adding a further layer of complexity to the ethno-politicization fueling Sudan's wars.

On the political front, it was with the announcement of the National Dialogue process in January 2014 that the NCP regime began to orchestrate the process of manufacturing the

illusion of stability in Sudan. The National Dialogue was characterized by a flagrant exclusion of major political actors and free civil society. Ultimately the Initiative became a tool to unify and rebrand the forces of political Islam under one umbrella. The re-branding was necessary because the ‘Civilization Project’ that was adopted and implemented by the unified Islamic Political Forces during the 90s and 2000s of the Ingaz’s regime had failed. The only achievement of the National Dialogue was to consolidate the power of the Islamists in what was ill-named the “national consensus” government. Formed through political compromise and bribery this government has lacked a program to address Sudan’s many crises.

The national dialogue also contributed to the creation of the illusion of stability which the ruling party and its leadership desperately wanted to project. The establishment of a permanent constitution is the next phase. This process is likely to resemble that of the national dialogue: ignoring universally accepted constitutional norms and reinforcing the exclusion and isolation of political voices outside the falsely manufactured “national consensus” A new constitution may be in place to govern the 2020 elections, but if the current conditions remain, it will merely reproduce the NCP rule.

In parallel to the National Dialogue, the ruling regime also was successful in steering its external relations into four tracks which earned it huge financial and political capital; cutting of all militarily, diplomatic and intelligence ties with Iran; engaging in the Saudi-led regional alliance; partnering in the European Union plan to fight illegal migration; and increasing security ties with foreign intelligence agencies in the so-called war-against-terror.

Much of this engagement was achieved through para-formal channels. This led to empowerment of certain networks within the ruling party that have become more influential than formal governmental institutions. Without check and balances, corruption and mismanagement increased. One example of this is the Rapid Support Force—a paramilitary force created on tribal lines to fight the war in Darfur—which overtook the role of the Formal Armed Forces in the Saudi military alliance in Yemen. It also sought legitimacy through its involvement in EU border force projects. Through serving international and regional interests the RSF found a way to cleanse its crimes and violations on the national level.

The closer alignment and support of foreign actors to the NCP regime poses several challenges to democratic forces. In addition to the direct political, economic and militarily support the NCP is receiving, there is a parallel reduction in support to independent civil society. Donors are becoming more explicit about pushing their agenda and in searching for windows to legitimize their support to the Sudanese regime such as the conditional support provided to activities on illegal migration that are tied to outputs of the national dialogue such as constitutional process

and piecemeal agreements. In addition to the security crackdown by the NCP regime, this manipulation of resources is the second major obstacle facing civil society. Both factors are facilitating the dissociation of civil society from its independent role in the political scene.

Against the background of the waning capacity and influence of the traditional political parties that have dominated the political scene, new actors have emerged. Since 2013 the Sudanese opposition and change forces have engaged in several attempts to create unified platforms. The signing of the Sudan Call agreement which launched a wide alliance of major political and civil actors, was a big breakthrough. However, disagreement on the political discourse, the rise of partisan ambitions and pretensions, lack of grassroots activities, and weak political capacities, led to the poor performance of the alliance.

FOUNDING MOMENTUM AND PRINCIPLES

The objectives, positions, and interventions of SDFG reflect a coherent vision of how to address Sudan's major challenges in respect to achieving peace, justice, democracy and development. In line with the convictions of the members of SDFG, SDFG's guiding principles and starting points for action include:

- The commitment of a like-minded group of actors who are driven by principled positions rather than temporary compromises and/or individual interests;
- the need for a rallying civil society movement which can counter the ambiguity, confusion and fragmentation experienced by independent civil society since the government crack-down, helping genuine advocates for human rights and democracy to have a strong voice in the political debate;
- the importance of creating a channel for the concerns and interests of those Sudanese who have been excluded—whether because of repression, lack of access to information and freedom expression or poverty—to be heard in public domain;
- a conviction that breaking the monopoly of traditional political forces on the public and political sphere is essential for change—this should also involve assisting those forces to transform through transfusion of the approaches and insights of civil society and other genuine social movements based on democratic and inclusive principles;
- the need for building partnerships with regional and international organizations to inject Sudanese perspectives in their advocacy messaging; SDFG resists paternalistic, neo-colonial interventions that do not reflect the will of the Sudanese people;

- the significance of promoting the values of solidarity, protection and cooperation among independent democratic civil society and civic actors through creating and providing support to individuals and groups that face challenges, including through mobilization of Sudanese resources;
- a determination to maintain an independent inclusive identity for SDFG that is built on a clear and principled vision and objectives, and which is resistant to both hijacking by political forces and reduction to a traditional “NGOing model”;
- the urgency of ensuring that as many diverse voices as possible, particularly among independent/ democratic agents, feed into solving the huge challenges facing Sudan’s stability, peace, justice and democracy, including the search for the re-definition and transformation of Sudan as a nation-state and the re-conception of a meaningful Sudanese equal citizenship.

APPROACHES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

SDFG works to promote democracy, peace and citizens’ engagement through addressing the root causes of the lack of inclusive democracy in Sudan. SDFG applies multi-disciplinary approaches to achieve its set objectives including the conduct of independent research and analysis and campaigning for justice and a lasting solution to the conflicts in Sudan. SDFG promotes civil society dialogue, collaboration and the development of a joint democratic agenda. SDFG facilitates the participation and engagement of democratic and independent civil society and its leadership in peace and political processes and dialogues.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Contribute to the building of an inclusive civic movement evolving around democracy, peace, accountability and balanced development;
- Strengthen coordination and networking among civil society groups, social and political movements and democratic initiatives and to facilitate engagement in peace and political processes;
- Put governance, accountability, just peace and democracy on the agenda for constitutional and state reform;
- Provide a rapid and flexible response to unforeseen needs which strengthen independent civil society actors/initiatives.

PROGRAMMES AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

SDFG operates through two main programmatic areas, in addition to the supporting pillars of policy, advocacy and communications. SDFG has two operational departments: the Administration and Financial Unit and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Fundraising Unit.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMME

SDFG contributes to developing governance alternatives and promoting greater dialogue on governance arrangements by: in-depth analysis of policies; hosting of policy roundtables and dialogue platforms for civic and political actors; mapping and advocating for thematic/sectorial security, governance and constitutional and legal reform and raising awareness and support through outreach and advocacy campaigns.

SDFG promotes the engagement of academia, policy experts, political parties, and with civil society groups and grassroots movements, in platforms for dialogue to foster a peaceful democratic transition in Sudan.

SDFG focusses on empowering citizens to demand accountability and transparency and fight against corruption, to foster governance reforms and to build a national anti-corruption movement. This is addressed through research and information sharing, highlighting both grand and petty corruption in Sudan; training and capacity building efforts, and capacity-building with communities to establish anti-corruption campaigns.

SDFG develops partnerships with political parties and informs the reform agenda through provision of capacity building as well as creating dialogue platforms on local, regional and international emerging issues, including, migration, ethnic politics, and the fight against terror. These activities promote the active role of pro-democracy political parties and civil society in democratic change, by strengthening active participation of the stakeholders, inclusive leadership, and providing institutional capacity for political parties in Sudan.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES PROGRAMME

SDFG empowers civil society in marginalized and vulnerable settings and areas within Sudan and among refugee communities through networking, capacity building, organizational development, project management, advocacy, outreach, promoting inclusive participation and research and Information-sharing on Sudan's conflicts.

SDFG contributes to building a Sudanese Civic Movement of pro-democratic change civil society agencies that can work with others in the civic and political community through civic resistance and transition agenda in order to achieve positive societal and political change.

SDFG promote peaceful and democratic engagement of civil society leaders in political platforms and processes. In addition to supporting active participation of such leaders, SDFG also conducts research and analysis on the political situation and its underlying dynamics relating to democracy, governance and conflict resolution.

COMMUNICATION, POLICY AND ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

Through its policy and advocacy and communications work, SDFG fosters dialogue and engagement with communities, policy makers and influential actors on the national, regional and international levels.

Based on regular publication and dissemination of indigenous Sudanese research and analysis regarding political developments peacebuilding efforts and potential governance reforms, SDFG influences Sudanese and international stakeholders. SDFG infuses this research and analysis into the decisions of national and international inside Sudan and abroad through advocacy and forms of engagement. Alliances with regional civil society organizations and bodies amplify SDFG's voice. Help to nurture political discourse among Sudanese civil society and the wider public.

In addition to advocacy work, SDFG uses audio-visual means to communicate its advocacy messages, and to outreach to different audience, internally and externally. These include more than three thousand contacts in SDFG's mailing list, website, Facebook twitter, and short video. WhatsApp Radio is also a new medium for communication that was developed by SDFG team to spread its awareness raising and advocacy materials.

REVIEW OF THE PAST STRATIGIC PERIOD

ACHIEVEMENTS

Between 2013 and 2016 SDFG's voice, and its research, advocacy and analysis from an indigenous Sudanese perspective, became recognized and heard by a variety of national, regional and international actors. SDFG managed to develop a unique approach among traditional civil society in Sudan in actively working with political actors and becoming involved with political processes around issues of accountability, democratic reform, peace processes

and governance. As part of this, SDFG promoted the participation of civil forces in political processes and strengthened civil society in interventions in the political sphere. Coordination and networking between civic forces was also conducted. This has resulted in hearing the voice of independent civil society in political platforms, and it becomes a main pillar in political processes.

SDFG also successfully contributed to building a bridge between civil society in the center, and the marginalized areas and peripheries of Sudan. These efforts were supported by training and capacity building for civil society in the conflict areas, and for youth, to create stronger connections and networks. For example, SDFG has been working in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan since 2012. SDFG has led several capacity building and training exercises in both government and non-government controlled areas, as well as in the refugee and IDP camps on organizational and project management, and technical aspects. This work aimed to empower grassroots civil society together to promote collaboration and a shared vision among actors. These activities have empowered civil society from the conflict zones to be more vocal and strong to express their issues and to closely coordinate with their counterparts in the center.

In 2014 SDFG initiated the “Sudan Transparency Initiative” as a platform to implement effective, non-violent anti-corruption campaigns in Sudan and to mobilize a wider demand for accountability and reform. The “Sudan Transparency Initiative” has focused on addressing both grand corruption and petty corruption, as well as the general lack of transparency and accountability in public and private sectors through research capacity building and information sharing.

Internally, SDFG restructured several approaches to its work, which lead to more effective and impactful project planning, design and implementation. For instance the participation of staff in project design and planning has positively impacted on SDFG’s successes.

CONSTRAINTS

SDFG regularly assesses the impact of its work both in regard to the interventions and its institutional capacity. Several obstacles presented during the last strategic intervention period. SDFG moved away from its strategic direction during some part of this strategy period, tending to priorities technical traditional interventions and avoiding political engagement over the more activist political participation and grassroots engagements which has inspired its establishment. This led to serious debate and intervention by the Board of Directors,

ultimately leading to a retrieval of SDFG's original strategic goals, partners and methods of works.

Among the constraints experienced was the reluctance by some actors to accept the role of civil society in political processes. Political participation and engagement with political forces remains a contentious issue among traditional NGOs.

Further constraints were posed by the limited availability of resources, alongside major shifts of funding priorities among donor organizations. The emphasis on project-based funding and a shift by donors to a multi-country approach has impacted funding sourcing.

The process of creating a unified civil society movement also presented challenges. These included divisions among civil society groups, complex relations with political and actors, ethnic politics and imposing of donors' agenda. SDFG would have liked to have made more progress over the past strategic period in contribution to the building and consolidation of a unified civic movement.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SDFG will continue to expand its operations and growth over the next strategic period of September 2017 to September 2020 under its current programmatic areas. Priorities of programming areas will include:

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

In regard to existing programming and interventions, SDFG will focus on expanding its outreach to civil society in the war affected areas, and with grassroots civil society both geographically and thematically. Particular emphasis will be put on Eastern Sudan: as previous engagements have highlighted the need to address issues of security, migration and broader work with civil society in this area.

SDFG will continue its work on Research and Knowledge dissemination and will emphasize the promotion of the participation of grassroots civil society from the peripheries and conflict zones in policy dialogue and peace-building. Lastly SDFG will increase its focus on movement-building and networking of grassroots civil society to create a joint agenda on issues of justice and accountability, democratic transformation as well as peace-building efforts and resolutions.

SDFG will incorporate cross-cutting issues in its programmatic interventions, such as racial discrimination, tribalism, in particular in its work on the peripheries. SDFG will strategically promote the participation of leaders, civil society and other initiative from the war affected areas, on a national basis, as well as expanding the opportunities for freedom of expression and the means and tools of the media, including access to information.

Work to support the engagement of political actors, within the Strategic Period of September 2017 to September 2020 will focus on promoting dialogue, and continuing to provide a platform for policy dialogue and discussion on reform in Sudan. SDFG will expanding its work in regard to promoting the participation of democratic actors in policy dialogue, based on research findings and recommendations. This will be alongside advocacy engagements, and efforts at movement building with democratic alliances and promoting the involvement of civil society, political parties, and academia. SDFG will conduct and publish research on issues of political parties reform in Sudan. Lastly SDFG will provide platforms for exchange between citizens, civic actors and political parties, alongside the promotion of women's participation, and working towards bridging the inter-generational gap between youth and leadership.

SDFG will devote efforts to the promotion of a joint and unified alliance for democratic change. SDFG will mobilize civil society leaders to act as mediators among opposition groups and actors, to limit division and fragmentation among actors, in order to consolidate the voice for change and democratic transformation. SDFG will also bridge the gap between political actors and academia, through the promotion of intellectual initiatives on evolving issues of democracy, peace, racism, justice and accountability, as well as means and processes for democratic change. This involve the hosting of dialogue forums, promoting exchange, and conducting research initiatives, to highlight arising opportunities, challenges and resolutions.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SDFG's priorities in regard to governance and accountability form several pillars of work. These range from campaign and movement building in establishing anti-corruption initiatives to democratic governance reforms. SDFG will continue to refine its policies for a democratic transformation, to promote a just, equal and peaceful system and society. SDFG will address these issues through increased research, outreach and information sharing, and expanding its capacity building efforts. It will expand its areas of intervention geographically within Sudan, following participatory approaches to empowerment.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

SDFG will expand its advocacy outreach and channels of dissemination, through new in-country advocacy activities such as public seminars across the country on the common root causes of the Sudanese crisis, and training and support of grassroots groups and movements. This will ensure increased involvement of citizens from conflict zones and promoting their participation. Target groups are e.g. students and youth engagements, dam affected populations and IDPs.

More focus will be put on the production of audio-visual material for audience inside and outside the country, including development of a WhatsApp Radio experience which has already been piloted, and the development of regular publications to provide in-depth analysis on the political environment in Sudan.

Lastly SDFG aims at expanding its existing advocacy work, through exchanging of experiences. These include working with existing initiatives and coalitions such as the Sudan Consortium among others. In this SDFG will aim at promoting issues on a national, regional and international level, and enhancing the participation of grassroots actors and victims of human rights violations in its advocacy work.

NEW AREAS OF INTERVENTION

SDFG will expand the thematic areas of its work to address issues of migration and resettlement and human-trafficking, inclusive of phenomena such as smuggling and organ-trafficking. SDFG will highlight the overall militarization and securitization of national and international policy, addressing issues of tribal mobilization and recruitment on tribal lines, child soldier recruitment, as well as radicalization and terrorism.

SDFG will expand its collaboration with existing initiatives and activism work, such as the Youth and Student-Movements, Unions (Medical, Tea-Sellers among others) and its work among grassroots actors, urban poor and civil society in general. In particular SDFG will focus on youth, taking into account their realities and promoting their active participation in civic and political processes. This will be addressed through capacity-building and expansion of engagement in political processes and platforms.

INTERNAL PRIORITIES

Internally, in regard to organizational capacity, and strategic approaches, SDFG will aim at focusing on various measures during the Strategic Period of 2017-2020, to improve its operations and accelerate its impact. The new strategy period will witness more engagement and expansion of roles of Board of Directors members through formation of specialized committees, in particular to advocate for SDFG goals and messaging, and in achieving programming areas identified in this strategy.

The period will also witness more visibility for SDFG through public activities inside Sudan, and in particular in Khartoum. Members of the Board of Directors will deploy their high profiles and good reputation in leading on these activities. SDFG will also aim at putting emphasis on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes, to measure impact of programmes and to improve, adapt and modify approaches and interventions to maximize its impact.

Regarding sourcing of funding, SDFG will aim at securing long-term funding, and core-funding in order to be able to shift its human resources from project contingent positions towards long term engagements. SDFG will also take into consideration alternative means of fundraising, as for example crowd-funding.

SDFG will additionally work on developing and strengthening internal procedures in order to increase institutional effectiveness. Among these will be the strengthening of governing rules and procedures of the organization, such as Bylaws, Monitoring and Evaluation, accountability mechanisms, security measures and enhancing measures to avoid conflicts of interest.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

According to the amended Constitution, July 2015, the SDFG structure comprises the following:

Board of Directors (BoD): The BoD is the highest level of decision making in SDFG, including on strategy and policy. The BoD is composed of maximum 13 members. BoD Members serve for a term of three years, which may be subject to one renewal period. As the highest level of decision making, the Board will approve strategies and policies, supervise and monitor the overall work of SDFG, develop its external relations and support fund-raising. The BoD assigns members to lead specialized committees, such as the political engagement committee and the diplomatic relations committee. The BoD appoints one member as the Executive Director with responsibility for management, through an appointment committee.

Executive Director: The BoD appoints the Executive Director, who reports directly to the BoD. This Executive Director, in turn appoints staff through a professional process and commitment to SDFG's values and strategic direction. The Executive team of SDFG will work to implement the word and spirit of this Strategy Plan, through, SDFG's organogram attached as an annex to this Strategic Plan Document.

STRATEGY PLAN REVIEW

SDFG will review the strategic plan and its implementation in two years. It will be important to have feedback from Board, staff, partners and stakeholders that helps to test validity of our perspectives and to improve the quality of planning. Two scenarios are envisaged:

- Scenario I: Meeting of the Board and other stakeholders involving direct discussion, brain-storming and assessing results from internal monitoring processes.
- Scenario II: Questionnaires, surveys and written feedback will be used to elicit views from stakeholders.

