

# SUDAN: Women, Food Insecurity, and Famine Risk in Sudan

## Gender Snapshot

21 July 2025

*This fact sheet, developed by the **Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group Sudan**, highlights key gendered trends from World Food Programme Quarter 1 2025 Consolidated Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment<sup>1</sup>. It presents urgent evidence and recommendations to inform a more equitable and gender-responsive humanitarian response.*

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

Sudan is in the grip of an escalating food crisis. Conflict, displacement, and the collapse of markets have pushed millions into acute food insecurity. In several regions, conditions are now at or near famine thresholds. **But this crisis is not gender neutral.**

The hunger crisis in Sudan is not gender neutral. Women are hungrier, poorer, and more desperate than ever. Food insecurity is deepening fastest among female-headed households, with **severe hunger nearly doubling** in just one year, from 14% in 2024 to 25.9% in early 2025. Today, **seventy-five percent of female-headed households** in Sudan are now food insecure, and nearly half report poor food consumption, almost double the rate from the year before.

**Female-headed households are three times more likely to be food insecure than those led by men.**

In a crisis where women are increasingly left to head households alone, due to the death, disappearance, or forced displacement of male family members, simply living in a woman-led household has become a statistical predictor of hunger.



## GENDER DIMENSIONS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN SUDAN

- **75% of female-headed households (FHHs) are food insecure**, up from 64% in 2024.
- Severe food insecurity among FHHs **nearly doubled in one year**—from 14% (2024) to 25.9% (2025).
- **Only 1.9% of FHHs** are food secure, compared to 5.9% of male-headed households.
- **45% of FHHs** report poor food consumption, nearly twice the rate of male-headed households (25.7%).
- **Only one-third of FHHs have an acceptable diet**, versus more than half of male-headed households.
- **73.7% of women nationally do not meet minimum dietary diversity**, limiting essential micronutrient intake and endangering maternal and child health.
- **FHHs rely more on fragile coping mechanisms**, such as remittances (10% vs. 4% for MHHs), and lack access to sustainable income sources.
- **Female-headed households are three times more likely to be food insecure** than male-headed

<sup>1</sup> WFP. 2025 Consolidated Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment. Qtr 1. 2025.

<sup>2</sup> OCHA. Sudan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 – Overview. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2025. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-overview>

households, highlighting the structural disadvantage they face in food access and resilience.

- **Acceptable food consumption has declined among FHHs**, dropping from 48% in 2024 to just 34% in Q1 2025—while men’s dietary quality has remained relatively stable.
- **Nearly 1 in 4 FHHs are living in conditions that approach or meet famine thresholds**, compared to only 7% of male-headed households.
- **Poor food consumption among FHHs has doubled in one year**, rising from 22% in 2024 to 45% in early 2025, underscoring a dramatic erosion of dietary quality.



### **WOMEN-LED ORGANIZATIONS ARE LEADING IN THE FRONTLINES**

Across Sudan, women-led organizations are on the frontlines of famine response, often operating with little to no support. From displacement sites to urban peripheries, WLOs are running community food kitchens, delivering hot meals to thousands, many of them women, children, and the elderly who have no other means to eat.

But despite their central role, funding is not reaching these lifelines. One women-led organization operating across 8 states with 60 food kitchens was recently forced to shut down 35 of them, not because the need diminished, but because funds dried up. Others report having to reduce meal frequency, limit service areas, or turn people away. WLOs are reaching last-mile communities, navigating local risks, and restoring dignity through communal care. Yet they remain systematically underfunded and unrecognized in response plans.



### **THIS IS A GENDERED RISK OF FAMINE — AND IT’S GETTING WORSE**

Sudan is not only approaching severe risk of famine — the risk is already here for millions, and women and girls are its hungriest face. The data is unequivocal: female-headed households are slipping deeper into starvation, with fewer coping mechanisms, less access to income, and even more systemic barriers than last year.

This is not just a food crisis — it’s a failure of gender-responsive action. Despite early warnings, the gendered dimensions of hunger must be addressed in decision-making, funding, and frontline interventions. The disparities are no longer subtle, they are structural, accelerating, and deadly.

Without bold, immediate shifts in how the humanitarian system understands and responds to this crisis, more women and girls will be food insecure, at risk of exploitation and not reached by emergency aid.



### **CENTER WOMEN-LED SOLUTIONS IN THE FAMINE RESPONSE**

To turn the tide of this gendered famine, the humanitarian system must do more than acknowledge the role of women-led organizations; it must resource them. Funding must be flexible, predictable, and directly accessible to WLOs that are already feeding communities and saving lives.

**Their leadership is not supplementary; it is essential.** Integrating WLOs into decision-making, coordination, and funding frameworks is not only a matter of equity, it is the most effective way to deliver aid to those who need it most.

**The newly established HCT Sudan Women’s Advisory Group (WAG)** is a key mechanism to ensure that the voices, priorities, and solutions of Sudanese women, particularly those most affected by the crisis, are systematically reflected in humanitarian decision-making. WAG members are drawn from diverse women-led and women’s rights organizations across Sudan and serve as a bridge between frontline realities and strategic response planning. Their insights and recommendations are critical to shaping an inclusive, accountable, and gender-responsive famine response. More on the WAG’s priorities, perspectives, and leadership will be featured in upcoming GiHA snapshots.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE HUMANITARIAN ACTION

### 1. Prioritize Female-Headed Households and At-Risk Groups

Ensure food assistance targets female-headed households, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and adolescent girls — the hungriest and most at risk.

### 2. Deepen Gender Analysis Across Food Security Planning

Integrate robust gender analysis into all food security assessments and strategies. Collect and use sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data to inform response.

### 3. Fund and Elevate Women-Led Food Support Initiatives

Channel flexible, accessible funding, including SHF and pooled funds, to women-led organizations providing frontline food assistance.

### 4. Include WLOs in Design and Decision-Making

Ensure WLOs are meaningfully engaged in food assistance planning, targeting, and coordination at national and subnational levels.

### 5. Link Food Assistance to Protection and Recovery

Design interventions that address intersecting risks — linking food aid with GBV mitigation, psychosocial support, and women's livelihoods.

### 6. Use Participatory and Safe Distribution Approaches

Involve women in assessments and planning. Ensure distributions are safe, accessible, and mitigate risks of GBV (e.g. through location, timing, modality).

### 7. Beyond Food — Support Women's Economic Recovery

Empower women through access to livelihoods and income-generation opportunities to build long-term food security.

### 8. Track Gender Outcomes, Not Just Outputs

Monitor the impact of food assistance on gender equality, protection, and women's agency — not just tonnage and beneficiary numbers.

## GiHA technical guidance and resources

These key resources developed by the IASC Gender and key agencies on support gender-inclusive food security in **Sudan**:

### [IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action \(2017\)](#)

Sector chapters, including Food Security, with gender-integrated analysis and response checklists.

**Key focus:** understanding gendered access to food, coping strategies, division of labor, and decision-making in households.

### [WFP Gender Policy \(2022–2026\)](#)

**Commits** to gender equality across all WFP programming. **Promotes** disaggregated food security analysis, engagement with women-led organizations, and empowerment-focused food assistance.

### [FAO-WFP Joint Programme Gender Transformative Approaches \(2020\)](#)

Explains **why food insecurity is gendered**.

Offers **gender-responsive program design**, including cash/voucher design, livelihood targeting, and nutrition-sensitive assistance.

### [Gender-sensitive IPC Food Security analysis \(2024\)](#)

This guidance provides information to IPC analysts on **conducting gender-sensitive IPC Acute Food Insecurity analyses**.

