AFRICAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE STUDIES

REBUILDING PROTECTION IN SUDAN!

From Fragmentation to Accountability in Child Protection Governance

A Structural Policy Gap Analysis (2010–2018)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 2010 and 2018, Sudan undertook significant efforts to expand its child protection architecture through the adoption of multiple national strategies addressing violence against children, harmful traditional practices, parental care, and the protection of children in vulnerable situations. These initiatives reflected an important policy shift toward formalizing protection commitments within national frameworks.

However, while the normative and strategic landscape expanded, implementation capacity did not evolve at the same pace. This study finds that childhood protection outcomes during the period under review were constrained not primarily by policy absence, but by structural governance weaknesses affecting coordination, accountability, and service integration. Fragmented vertical coordination between federal policy-making bodies and sub-national implementation authorities limited institutional coherence.
Overlapping mandates and sector-specific interventions frequently operated in isolation, resulting in duplicative institutional roles and inconsistent service delivery pathways. Monitoring and data systems remained insufficiently integrated, weakening oversight and reducing the ability to measure impact across regions.

In addition, limited mechanisms for sustained stakeholder participation and civic oversight constrained inclusive policy operationalization. Without institutionalized channels for accountability, regulatory oversight remained uneven, particularly where service provision involved multiple actors.

The findings suggest that strengthening child protection in Sudan requires moving beyond policy proliferation toward systemic reform. Rebuilding protection demands aligned institutional mandates, strengthened monitoring and regulatory frameworks, improved inter-governmental coordination, and rights-based service delivery models capable of ensuring availability, accessibility, adequacy, and quality across regions.
Ultimately, the transition from fragmented strategies to coherent protection systems represents not only an administrative reform imperative, but a structural requirement for translating formal commitments into measurable protection outcomes for children.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Structural Fragmentation of Childhood Governance
Childhood policy frameworks in Sudan (2010–2018) were characterized by institutional fragmentation and weak coordination, with multiple laws, strategies, and sectoral plans operating in parallel rather than as an integrated governance system.
2. Gap Between Legal Commitments and Implementation
Despite Sudan's ratification of international and regional child rights instruments and the adoption of the 2010 Child Act, implementation mechanisms remained weak and legal commitments were not consistently translated into enforceable governance practices.
3. Dominance of Basic-Needs Approach Over Rights-Based Governance
Policy interventions primarily focused on service delivery framed around basic needs rather than a rights-based governance model grounded in accountability and enforceable obligations.
4. Weak Institutional Accountability and Overlapping Mandates
Responsibilities among national and sub-national institutions lacked clarity, with inconsistent coordination across governance levels leading to blurred accountability.
5. Insufficient Policy Coherence Across Childhood Stages
Policy instruments addressed sectors separately without ensuring continuity across childhood stages, leaving transitional phases—particularly early childhood to school entry—insufficiently protected.
6. Structural Economic Constraints on Social Investment
Macroeconomic instability, fiscal pressures, and the loss of oil revenues limited public investment in education, health, and child protection systems.
7. Persistence of Harmful Practices
High prevalence of FGM/C and child marriage reflected weak enforcement mechanisms, legal ambiguity, and entrenched social norms.
8. Data and Monitoring Limitations
Weak integration between policy frameworks and quantitative data systems constrained monitoring capacity and obscured outcome tracking across states.
9. Limited Institutionalization of Stakeholder Engagement
Stakeholder participation existed but was not systematically embedded within formal governance structures.
10. Systemic Nature of Policy Gaps
Policy deficiencies were structural rather than programmatic, stemming from institutional design weaknesses, coordination failures, and limited enforcement capacity.

FOREWORD

Efforts to strengthen childhood protection and development systems in Sudan have intensified over the past decade, with the adoption of multiple legislative frameworks and national strategies aligned with international child rights commitments. During the period under review (2010–2018), Sudan undertook a range of policy initiatives addressing violence against children, parental care, and the protection of children in vulnerable situations, including those living on the streets or affected by displacement.

While these efforts reflect an expanding normative commitment to the protection and development of children, they also highlight a persistent challenge observed across decentralized governance environments: the existence of formal policy frameworks does not necessarily translate into effective operationalization at sub-national and community levels. In several instances, policy adoption has outpaced the institutional, financial, and coordination capacities required for consistent service delivery, resulting in implementation gaps that affect the accessibility, quality, and sustainability of child-related interventions.

This Policy Gap Analysis examines the extent to which childhood protection and development commitments adopted between 2010 and 2018 have been integrated into governance systems and translated into operational practice across federal, state, and locality levels. Rather than focusing solely on the presence of legislative and strategic instruments, the analysis considers the broader structural conditions that shape implementation feasibility, including demographic pressures, fiscal constraints, institutional coordination, and exposure to socio-economic risk factors such as poverty, conflict, and displacement.

The study further explores the relationship between policy coherence and implementation capacity, with particular attention to the ways in which decentralized administrative arrangements, limited monitoring mechanisms, and fragmented service delivery pathways may affect the realization of child rights commitments. Special consideration is given to protection risks associated with harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, as well as the structural determinants that contribute to their persistence in specific socio-economic and geographic contexts.

By situating childhood policy commitments within the institutional and operational environments in which they are implemented, this study seeks to identify areas of divergence between policy intent and service delivery outcomes. The findings aim to inform future policy reform efforts by supporting a transition from welfare-oriented service provision toward a more coherent, rights-based governance framework capable of addressing the interconnected protection, development, and participation needs of children.

It is our expectation that the evidence and analysis presented in this study will contribute to ongoing national dialogue on childhood policy reform and strengthen the alignment between legal frameworks, institutional mandates, and implementation practices across Sudan's governance levels.

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTE AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

This study applies a structured policy gap analysis approach to examine the alignment between childhood protection and development policy commitments and their implementation within Sudan's decentralized governance system during the period 2010–2018. The analytical framework adopted distinguishes between the formal adoption of legislative and strategic policy instruments and the institutional, financial, and administrative conditions required for their operationalization across federal, state, and locality levels.
This study adopts a mixed citation approach consistent with applied policy analysis practice. Conceptual and methodological sources are referenced through page-level footnotes, while legal instruments, policy frameworks, and institutional data sources are consolidated within the final References section.

The analysis is based on a multi-dimensional review of policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, and service delivery environments relevant to childhood protection and development. Rather than assessing policy presence in isolation, the study considers the broader structural context within which implementation occurs, including demographic composition, fiscal space, sub-national administrative capacity, and exposure to socio-economic risk factors such as poverty, conflict, and displacement.

A key methodological distinction is made between:

- Structural variables, which shape the implementation environment, including governance complexity, service infrastructure distribution, legal enforcement gaps, and institutional reach across sub-national regions; and
- Operational variables, which relate to coordination mechanisms, monitoring systems, data integration, and the capacity of implementing institutions to translate policy commitments into sustained service delivery outcomes.

This differentiation enables the study to assess the extent to which observed disparities in childhood protection and development outcomes may be associated with policy design limitations, institutional fragmentation, or constraints in implementation capacity within decentralized administrative arrangements.

Data sources used in the analysis include:

- National legislative and policy documents;
- Population and socio-economic indicators derived from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and related statistical reports;
- Multidimensional poverty assessments conducted by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI);
- Public expenditure and sectoral service delivery analyses prepared by the World Bank and United Nations agencies; and
- Programme evaluation reports addressing harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.

Where relevant, visual analytical tools are used to present comparative indicators and structural exposure patterns affecting childhood policy implementation across sub-national regions. These figures support the interpretation of implementation feasibility without duplicating descriptive content within the main analytical text.

The methodological approach adopted in this study is intended to support the identification of policy–implementation divergences across governance levels and inform future policy reform efforts aimed at strengthening coherence between legal commitments, institutional mandates, and operational practice within Sudan's childhood protection and development systems.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBS — Central Bureau of Statistics

CPD — Central Population Directorate

CRC — Convention on the Rights of the Child

CSOs — Civil Society Organizations

FGM/C — Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

GDP — Gross Domestic Product

IDPs — Internally Displaced Persons

MICS — Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

MPI — Multidimensional Poverty Index

NCCW — National Council for Child Welfare

OECD — Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SHHS — Sudan Household Health Survey

UN — United Nations

UNDP — United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA — United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF — United Nations Children's Fund

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PART ONE

Introduction, Purpose, and Methodological Framework

Introduction

1.1 Policy Context

Childhood policy constitutes a foundational pillar for social development and long-term institutional resilience. During the period between 2010 and 2018, Sudan faced persistent structural challenges that shaped governance systems and public service delivery across multiple sectors. Within the childhood policy domain, legislative and strategic frameworks addressing care, protection, health, and education were present at national and sub-national levels. However, implementation remained uneven across administrative tiers due to fragmented coordination mechanisms, overlapping institutional mandates, and variations in local governance capacity.

1.2 Policy Fragmentation and Governance Interfaces

Childhood-related policy frameworks during the study period operated within a multi-layered governance environment. While national-level instruments outlined formal policy commitments, implementation processes were significantly influenced by institutional capacity, local administrative arrangements, and community-based practices.

In contexts where state provision was limited, informal and traditional care mechanisms played a decisive role in mediating access to services and interpreting policy provisions. The absence of a comprehensive and integrated approach to childhood development further constrained policy effectiveness, particularly across transitional stages between early childhood care and entry into formal education.

1.3 Study Objective and Analytical Scope

This study undertakes a policy gap analysis of childhood-related policies and practices in Sudan during the period 2010–2018. The objective is to identify structural, institutional, and regulatory gaps that may have impeded the realization of child rights and increased childhood vulnerability.
The analysis focuses on policy coherence, alignment, and governance logic rather than on program- level evaluation. It examines how policy design, institutional arrangements, and stakeholder interactions shaped childhood outcomes across complex and transitional governance contexts.

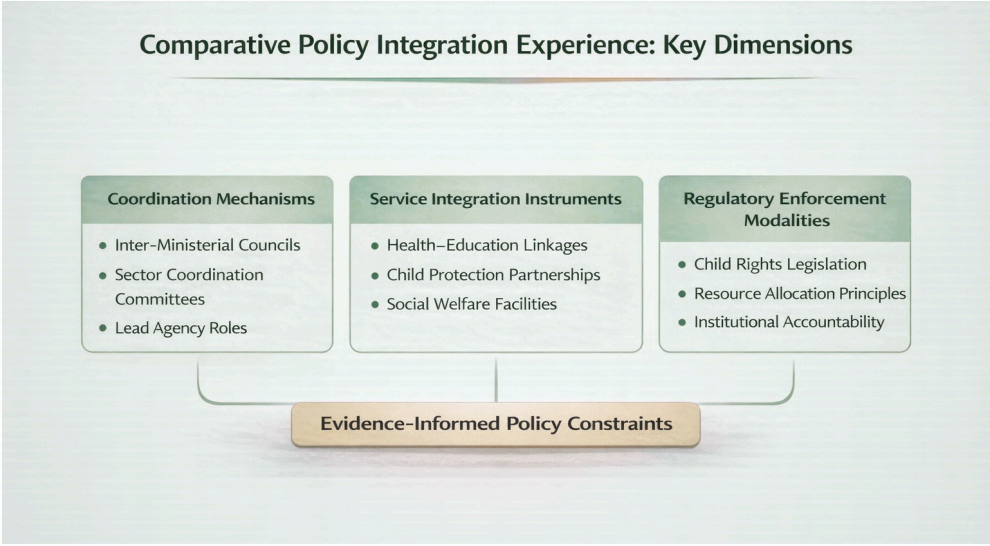


Figure 1.1 – Comparative Policy Integration Experience: Key Dimensions

1.4 Methodological Framework: Policy Gap Analysis

This research adopts a qualitative policy gap analysis framework to examine childhood policy systems in Sudan between 2010 and 2018. Policy gaps are conceptualized to include inconsistencies between policy intent and implementation, ambiguities in institutional mandates, weak coordination mechanisms, and regulatory provisions that inadequately address critical stages of childhood development.
The analysis proceeds through a structured review of national laws, policy documents, strategic frameworks, and institutional guidelines relevant to childhood across sectors such as education, health, child protection, and social welfare.

[1] Muna Jalal Awad. (2009). Vocabulary of the Public Policies: A New Methodology in the Study of Political Systems. Political Sciences Journal, (20), No. 38/39(s), pp. 390–393
[1] Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017). Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice (6th ed.). Routledge, pp. 23–28.

1.5 Stakeholder-Informed Analytical Perspective

As an integral component of the policy gap analysis framework, the study incorporates a stakeholder perspective to contextualize policy design and implementation. Childhood policy operates within a complex ecosystem involving governmental institutions, sub-national authorities, community structures, civil society organizations, and families as primary caregivers.

The analysis examines how stakeholder roles were defined, how coordination was intended to occur, and where gaps or ambiguities emerged. Differences in stakeholder understanding of policy objectives and interfaces are analyzed as contributing factors to fragmented implementation and weak policy coherence.

1.6 Data Sources and Analytical Process

This study draws on qualitative documentary sources to conduct the policy gap analysis of childhood-related frameworks in Sudan between 2010 and 2018. The primary materials include national legislation, policy documents, strategic plans, institutional guidelines, and regulatory texts relevant to education, health, child protection, and social welfare. These documents were examined to identify policy objectives, delineate institutional responsibilities, and understand intended coordination arrangements.

In addition, the study refers to secondary academic and policy literature related to childhood issues in Sudan in order to contextualize formal policy commitments within broader social, economic, and governance dynamics.

The analytical process involved mapping existing childhood policy frameworks, identifying areas of overlap, omission, and fragmentation, and assessing how policies addressed key developmental stages and transitions. Particular attention was given to the clarity of policy interfaces, the distribution of responsibilities between national and sub-national actors, and the institutional mechanisms established for coordination and accountability.

Rather than evaluating program-level outcomes or employing quantitative performance indicators, the analysis focuses on structural coherence, institutional alignment, and governance logic. The aim is to clarify how policy design and implementation arrangements may have contributed to uneven realization of child protection and developmental objectives during the study period.

[3] Afandi, A. H. (2003). Empowering Employees: An Introduction to Continuous Improvement and Development. Arab Organization for Administrative Development, p. 10.

PART TWO

Public Policy Trends in Childhood Governance

2.1 Evolving Public Policy Landscape

Public policy systems in contemporary governance environments are increasingly required to respond to complex and interdependent social challenges. These challenges are shaped by demographic shifts, socio-economic inequalities, institutional capacity constraints, and evolving public expectations regarding access to services and social protection.
In such contexts, policy analysis serves as a structured framework for identifying public problems, assessing alternative interventions, and supporting decision-making processes through evidence-informed approaches. Rather than focusing solely on theoretical explanations of social phenomena, policy analysis contributes to the development of context-sensitive solutions that are institutionally feasible and socially acceptable.

2.2 Policy Demand and Governmental Response

The expansion of governmental responsibilities in modern administrative systems is closely associated with the emergence of societal challenges requiring coordinated policy intervention. These challenges may include resource inequities, access to essential services such as education and health, and the need for protective regulatory frameworks addressing vulnerable population groups.
In the childhood policy domain, public intervention becomes particularly significant where access to developmental support mechanisms is shaped by structural inequalities or institutional limitations.

[2] Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017). Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice (6th ed.). Routledge, pp. 23–28.

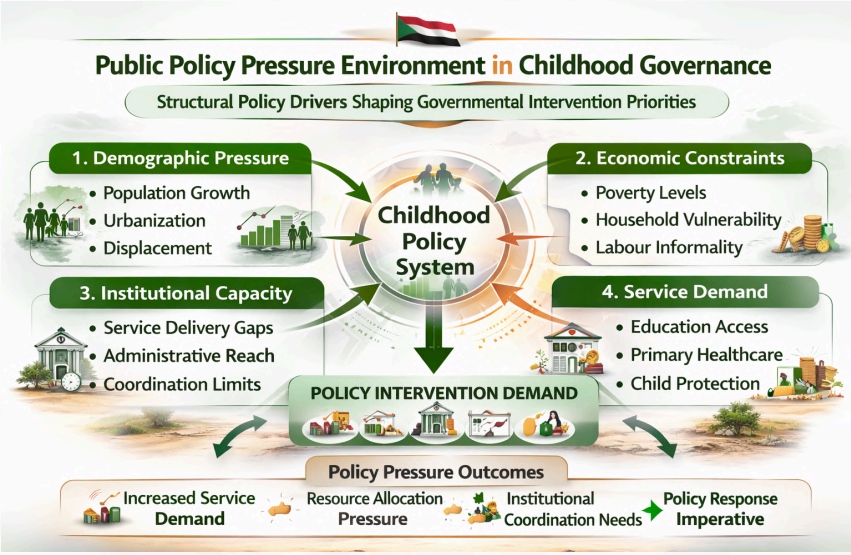


Figure 2.1 – Public Policy Pressure Environment in Childhood Governance

2.3 Childhood Policy Research Trends in Sudan

Since the early 1990s, childhood-related research in Sudan has demonstrated sustained but uneven academic engagement. Available literature remains dispersed across conference papers, institutional reports, and individual studies, indicating a fragmented research landscape influenced by accessibility constraints rather than by a unified national research agenda.

Thematically, a significant portion of the reviewed literature situates childhood issues within broader discussions of poverty, economic conditions, and social structures. Health, protection, and welfare dimensions are addressed less consistently, while development-oriented perspectives remain comparatively underrepresented.

2.4 Methodological Imbalance in Childhood Policy Research

Methodologically, accessible literature is predominantly qualitative in orientation, emphasizing descriptive and interpretive approaches to institutional frameworks, community practices, and normative understandings of childhood welfare and protection.

Quantitative studies, including large-scale surveys, longitudinal analyses, and structured fieldwork, appear less frequently. Where statistical data are present, they are often employed illustratively rather than as the primary basis for policy evaluation.

Limited integration between qualitative insights and quantitative evidence constrains the capacity to assess policy effectiveness, monitor changes over time, or evaluate implementation outcomes across regions and population groups.

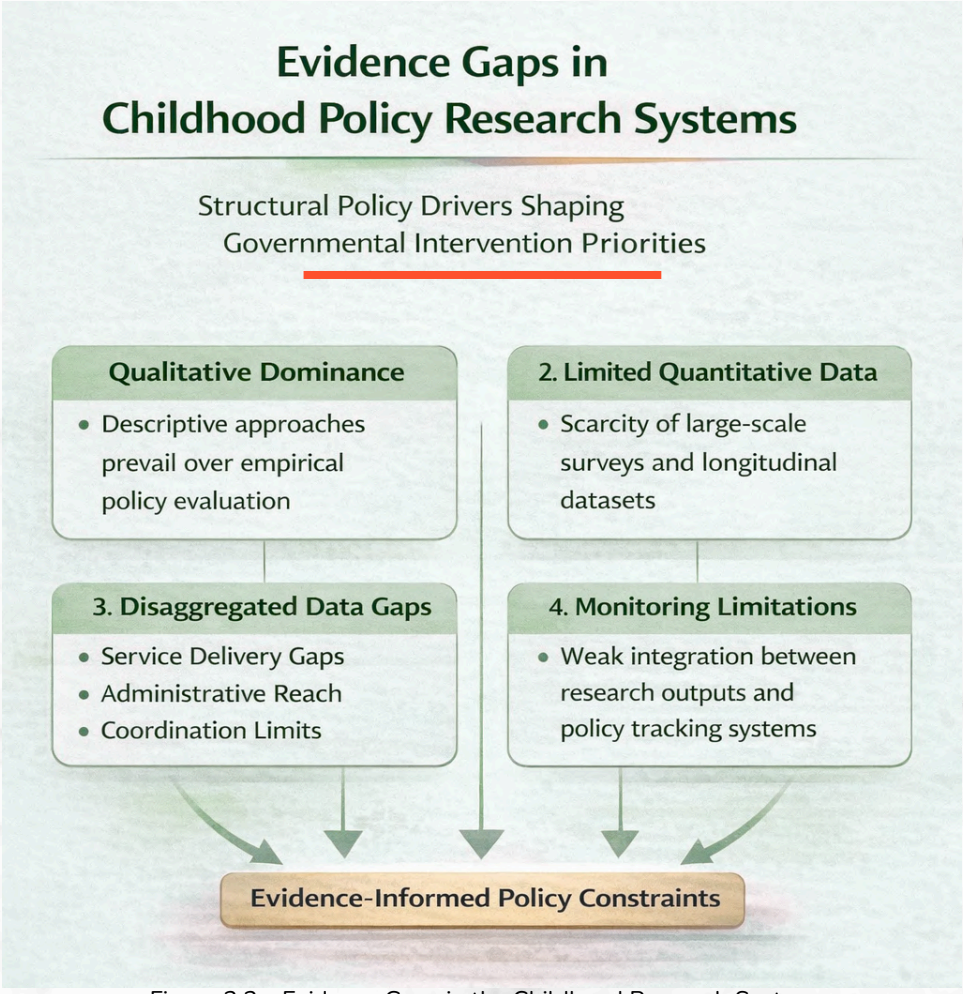


Figure 2.2 – Evidence Gaps in the Childhood Research System

2.5 Implications for Policy Analysis

The thematic and methodological characteristics of childhood-related research in Sudan suggest the presence of significant evidence gaps affecting policy design and evaluation processes.
In particular, limited availability of disaggregated data and the absence of integrated analytical frameworks may constrain the development of coordinated policy responses addressing childhood vulnerability across governance levels.

[1] Muna Jalal Awad. (2009). Vocabulary of the Public Policies: A New Methodology in the Study of Political Systems. Political Sciences Journal, (20), No. 38/39(s), pp. 390–393
[1] Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017). Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice (6th ed.). Routledge, pp. 23–28.

Purpose line

Diversity can represent social strength, governance arrangements have historically struggled to accommodate political, regional, and identity-based demands. The federal decentralization model introduced in the 1990s established a three-tier administrative system (federal, state, locality). Persistent tensions surrounding representation, resource distribution, and political inclusion continue to shape governance reform debates, with direct implications for service delivery coordination, sub-national implementation capacity, and policy enforcement consistency. This section consolidates structural conditions that shape the feasibility, reach, and performance of childhood policy frameworks in Sudan and informs the subsequent policy gap analysis.

Figure 3.1 – Structural Governance Context Affecting Childhood Policy Delivery

Sudan at a Glance

- Total Area: 1,882,000 km²
- Administrative Structure: 18 States
- Population (2018): 44.23 million
- Governance System: Federal (three tiers: federal, state, locality)
- Geographic Position: Northeastern Africa, bordering seven countries

3.1 Structural Governance Context

Sudan's federal administrative structure and territorial diversity shape institutional reach and coordination mechanisms across sub-national levels, influencing the operationalization of childhood policy frameworks. Governance complexity within decentralized administrative arrangements continues to affect the consistency of childhood service provision across regions.

Population Structure by Age and Sex, Sudan (2016)

Sudan's youth-heavy demographic composition introduces sustained demand pressures on social services, including education, primary health care, and child protection systems.

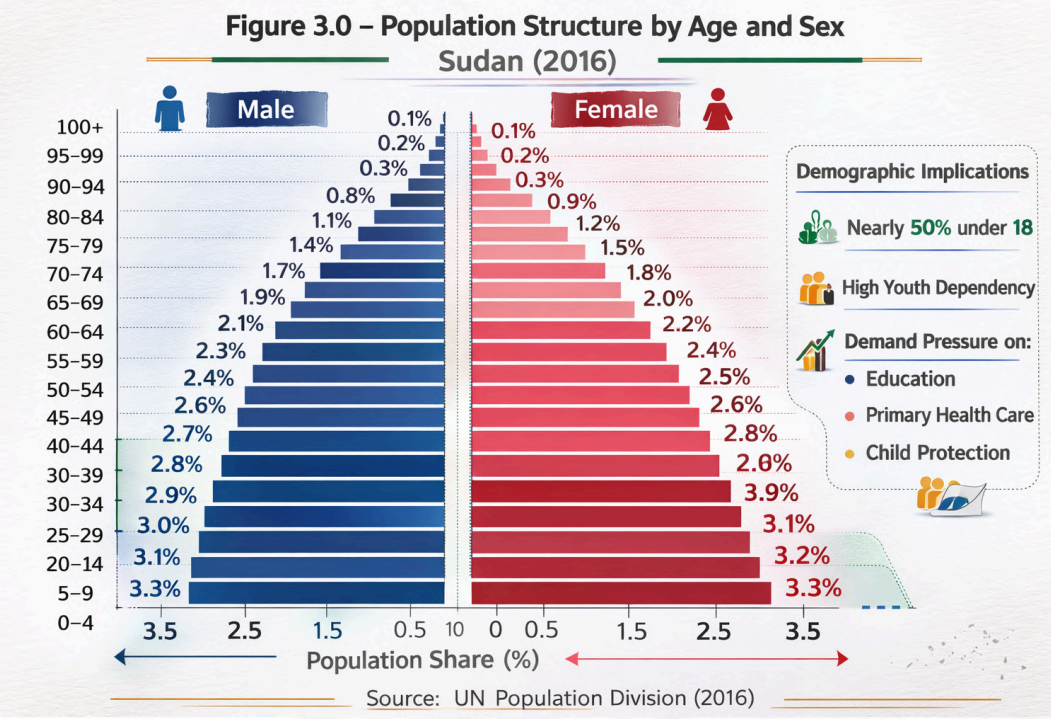


Figure 3.2 – Population Structure by Age and Sex, Sudan (2016)
Source: World Bank

This demographic profile introduces long-term demand pressures on child-related service delivery sectors, with implications for fiscal planning and administrative coordination across sub-national governance levels.

3.2 Demographic Structure and Population Composition (2016)

Sudan's demographic composition reflects a youthful population structure with long-term implications for public policy planning. The concentration of children and adolescents increases demand pressures on social services—particularly education, primary health care, and child protection. In the absence of sustained fiscal investment and effective administrative coordination, demographic momentum is likely to intensify structural vulnerabilities and widen sub-national disparities in service access.

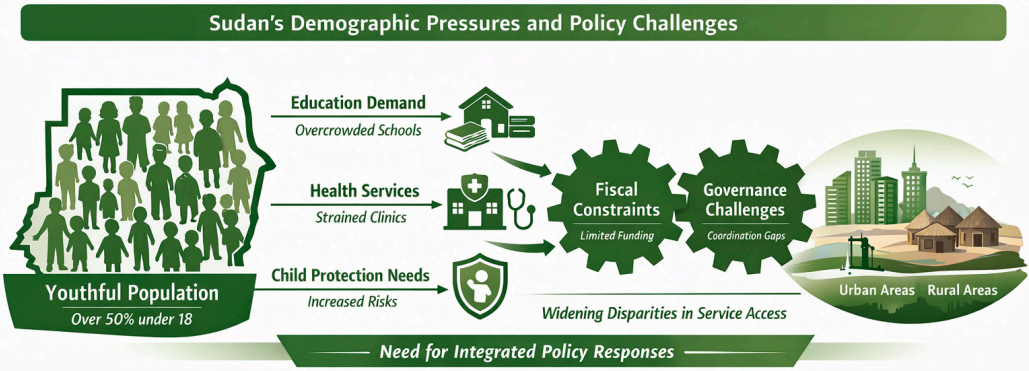


Figure 3.3 – Demographic Pressures and Policy Challenges

The concentration of children and adolescents introduces structural demand pressures on education, primary health care, and child protection systems, requiring coordinated administrative responses to mitigate implementation gaps across governance levels.

[4] Worldometer. (2018). Sudan Historical Population. Retrieved from: https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/sudan-population/

3.3 Macroeconomic and Fiscal Constraints and Institutional Capacity (2010–2016)

Macroeconomic volatility during the period under review shaped fiscal space and constrained social sector financing.

Indicators of GDP growth, inflation, public expenditure ratios, and budget deficits suggest a context in which policy adoption frequently outpaced operational funding and sub-national delivery capacity.

This environment weakened the ability of institutions to expand coverage, invest in monitoring systems, and sustain integrated service delivery mechanisms.

Public sector expenditure trends indicate structural fiscal limitations affecting sustained investment in child-related services across key service delivery sectors.

Fiscal constraints continue to shape disparities in access to essential childhood services across regions and population groups.

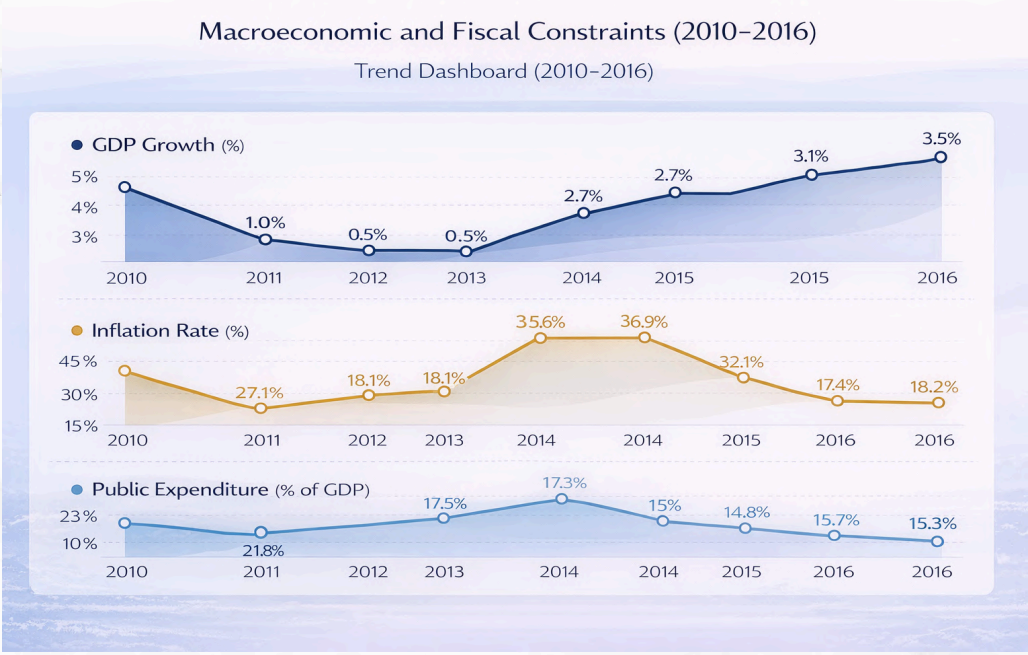


Figure 3.4 – Macroeconomic and Fiscal Constraints and Institutional Capacity (2010–2016)

Public sector expenditure trends indicate structural fiscal limitations affecting sustained investment in child-related services across key service delivery sectors

Implementation Risk Note

Elevated multidimensional poverty exposure constrains fiscal investment capacity for sustained childhood service delivery across decentralized governance levels.

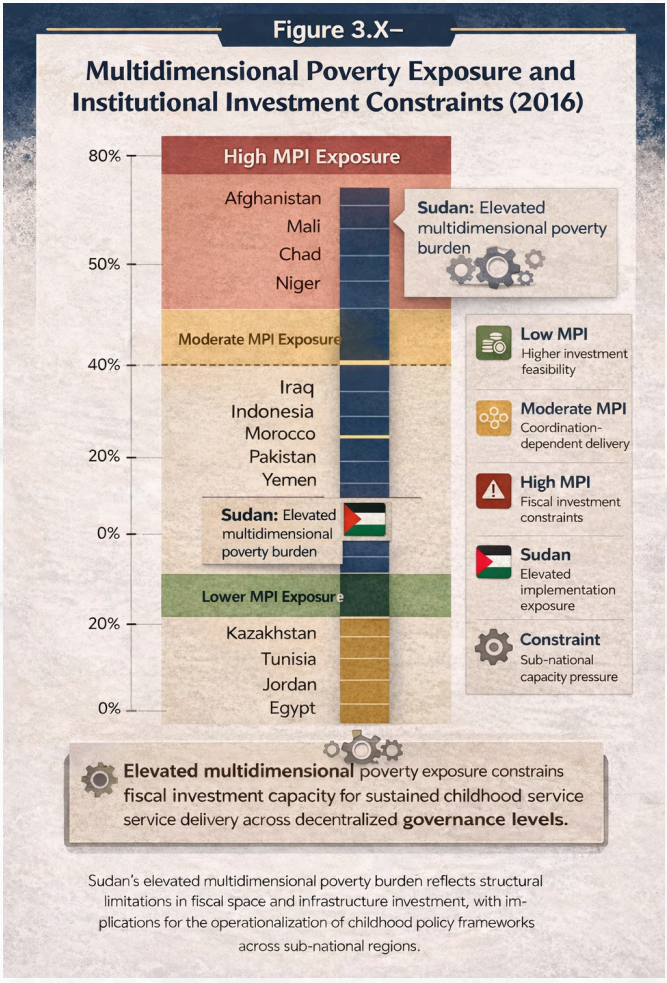


Figure 3.5 – Multidimensional Poverty Exposure and Institutional Investment Constraints (2016)

Sudan's elevated multidimensional poverty burden reflects structural limitations in fiscal space and infrastructure investment, with implications for the operationalization of childhood policy frameworks across sub-national regions

3.4 Sectoral Childhood Service Conditions

Child-related service provision during the study period was marked by uneven access to primary health care, education, nutrition support, and basic sanitation services across sub-national regions.
Variations in service availability were particularly pronounced in rural and conflict-affected areas, reflecting disparities in infrastructure coverage, trained personnel distribution, and institutional reach.
Sub-national disparities in service delivery reflect structural constraints in infrastructure, workforce distribution, and institutional coordination.

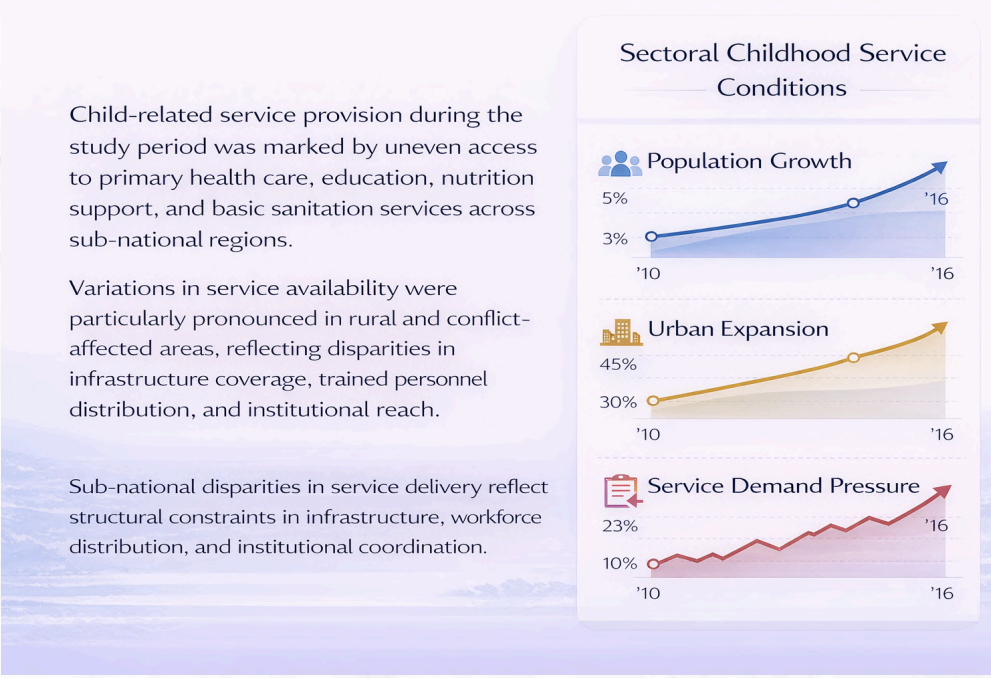


Figure 3.6 – Sectoral Childhood Service Conditions

Sub-national disparities in service delivery reflect structural constraints in infrastructure, workforce distribution, and institutional coordination.

[5] World Bank. (2012). The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan. Washington, DC: World Bank.

3.5 Child Protection Outcomes and Structural Risk Factors

Child-related service provision during the study period was marked by uneven access to primary health care, education, nutrition support, and basic sanitation services across sub-national regions.
Variations in service availability were particularly pronounced in rural and conflict-affected areas, reflecting disparities in infrastructure coverage, trained personnel distribution, and institutional reach.

Figure 3.7 – Child Protection Outcomes and Structural Risk Factors

Structural Exposure Environment Affecting Childhood Policy Implementation

Childhood policy implementation in Sudan operates within a structural exposure environment shaped by poverty, conflict dynamics, displacement patterns, and variations in institutional reach across sub-national regions. These contextual pressures define the operational conditions under which protective services and development interventions are delivered across education, health, and social protection sectors.

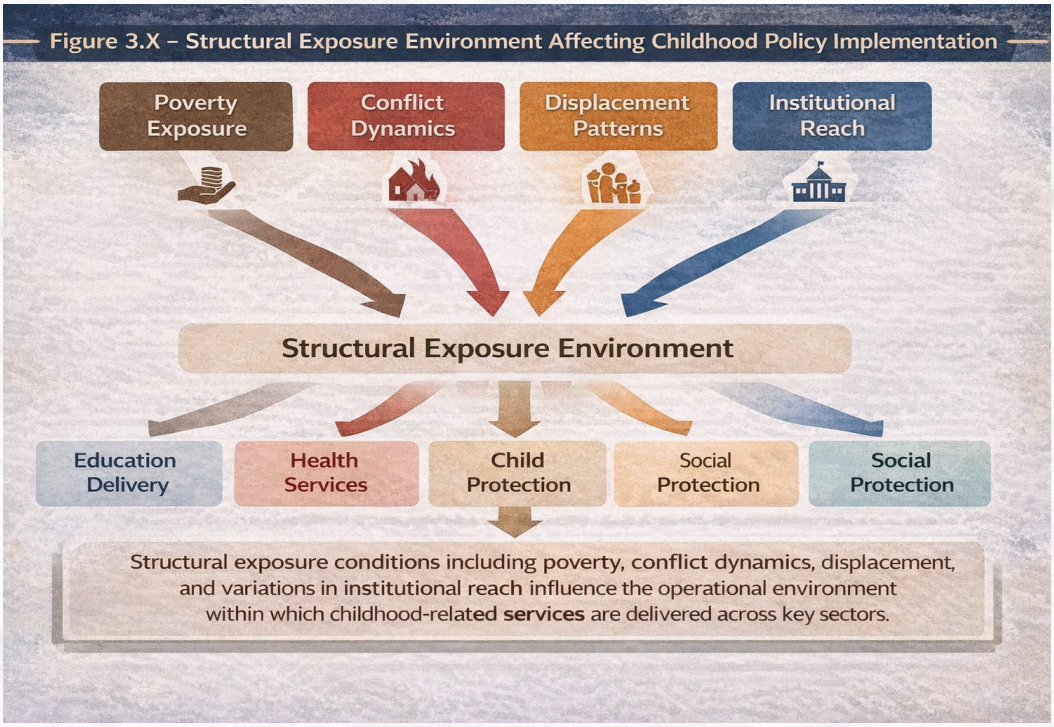


Figure 3.8 – Structural Exposure Environment Affecting Childhood Policy Implementation

Structural exposure conditions including poverty, conflict dynamics, displacement, and variations in institutional reach influence the operational environment within which childhood-related services are delivered across key sectors.

3.6 Structural Determinants of Child Marriage Risk

Child marriage in Sudan remains closely associated with structural socio-economic determinants.
National survey data indicate that girls from rural households, large family structures, and low parental education backgrounds are disproportionately affected.
These patterns suggest that early marriage outcomes are not solely culturally driven, but are shaped by intersecting conditions of poverty, service access limitations, and institutional capacity gaps at sub-national levels.

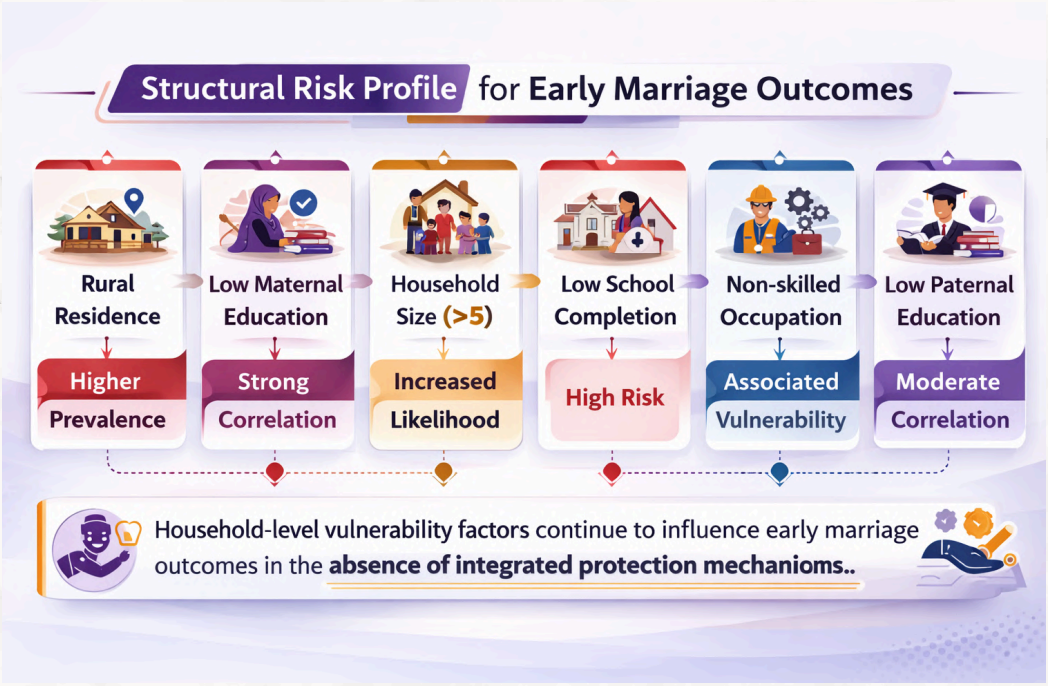


Figure 3.9 – Structural Determinants of Child Marriage Risk

Household-level vulnerability factors continue to influence early marriage outcomes in the absence of integrated protection mechanisms.

Legal and Institutional Protection Gaps (FGM/C & Child Marriage)

The persistence of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage reflects the interaction between entrenched social norms, legal inconsistencies, and limited enforcement capacity within the national child protection framework.

Legal reform efforts have been inconsistent, contributing to gaps between child rights commitments and enforceable domestic legislation.

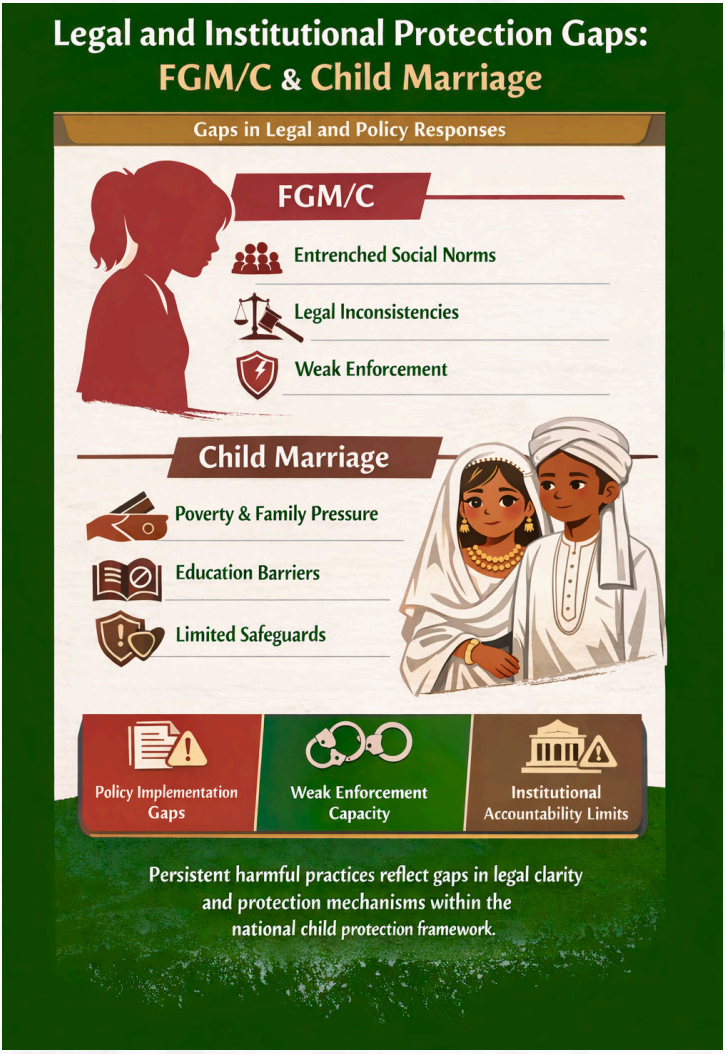


Figure 3.10 – Legal and Institutional Protection Gaps: FGM/C and Child Marriage

Harmful Practices and Legal Gaps (FGM/C & Child Marriage)

The persistence of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage reflects the interaction between entrenched social norms, legal inconsistencies, and limited enforcement capacity within the national child protection framework.
Legal reform efforts have been inconsistent, contributing to gaps between child rights commitments and enforceable domestic legislation.

Figure 3.11 – Legal and Policy Timeline on Harmful Practices

Legal reform efforts have been inconsistent, contributing to gaps between child rights commitments and enforceable domestic legislation.

3.7 Synthesis: Policy-Relevant Structural Constraints

The structural characteristics outlined above — including governance complexity, fiscal limitations, uneven service distribution, and exposure to harmful practices — collectively shape the operational environment within which childhood policies are implemented in Sudan. Institutional reach across sub-national regions remains uneven, and service delivery systems are frequently constrained by limitations in coordination, data availability, and sectoral integration.

These conditions contribute to persistent disparities in access to health, education, and protection services, particularly among rural populations and conflict-affected communities

The analysis of structural constraints provides a necessary empirical basis for assessing policy implementation gaps across governance levels. Current institutional arrangements indicate partial implementation readiness across childhood-related policy sectors.

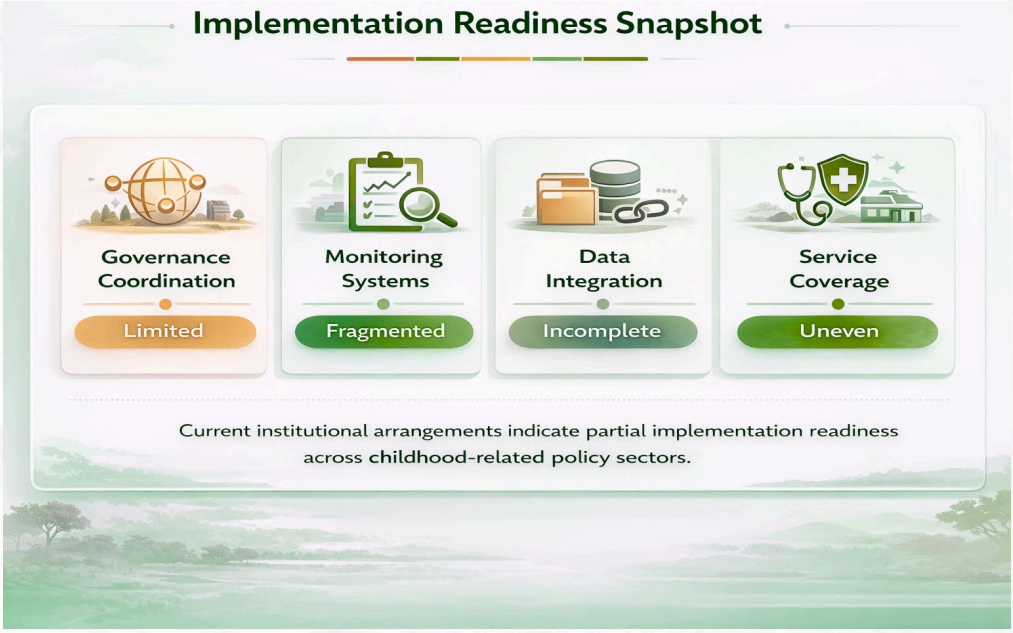


Figure 3.12 – Implementation Readiness Snapshot

Current institutional arrangements indicate partial implementation readiness across childhood-related policy sectors

PART FOUR

Policy Gap Analysis (2010–2018)

From Child Protection to Child Rights Governance

During the period under review (2010–2018), Sudan adopted a range of legal and policy frameworks aligned with international child rights commitments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. These efforts were accompanied by the establishment of national strategies addressing violence, parental care, and children in street situations. Despite the expansion of the normative and institutional framework, policy adoption was not consistently accompanied by operational integration or enforcement mechanisms. A persistent divergence therefore emerged between formal commitments and the effective delivery of child-related services across sub-national and community levels

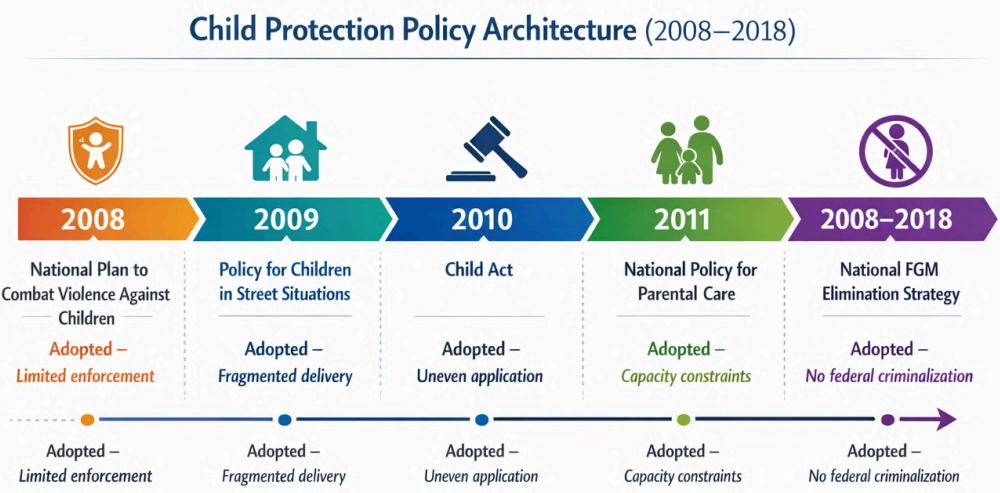
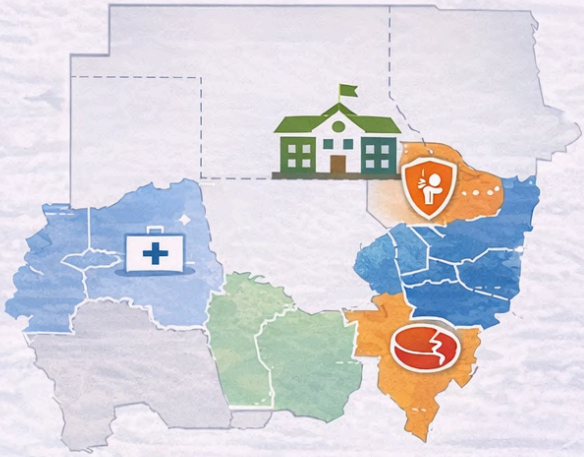


Figure 4.1 – Child Protection Policy Architecture (2008–2018)

Gaps in Implementation of Childhood Services Frameworks

2010–2018 sectoral oversight in Sudan faced structural constraints preventing equitable delivery of childhood services across the country.



Governance Gap	Data Gap	Evaluation Gap
Governance Gap Inconsistent policy execution mechanisms	**Data Gap** Limited disaggregated and real-time child-focused data	**Poverty** Challenges in poverty-targeted social protection program delivery

Health	Education	Poverty
• Limited reach of child health facilities and referral systems	• Gaps in school accessibility and barriers to effective teaching	• Challenges in poverty-targeted social protection program delivery

Health	Child Protection	Education
• Limited reach of child health facilities and referral systems	• Weak enforcement of child protection laws and safeguarding measures	• Gaps in school accessibility and barriers to effective teaching

Figure 4.2 – Gaps in Implementation of Childhood Service Frameworks

Despite the formal establishment of sectoral childhood service frameworks between 2010 and 2018, implementation outcomes remained constrained by governance fragmentation, limited data integration, weak monitoring systems, and inconsistent policy enforcement across service delivery levels.

KEY FINDING

Policy expansion between 2010 and 2018 was not not matched by instituunal consoldation or enfrossable implementation mechanisms, resulting in a persisent gap betwenap between formal compttments and operational delivery across governance levels.

4.1 Institutional & Governance Mechanisms

4.1 National Efforts toward the Protection of Child and Girls' Rights
During the period under review (2010–2018), Sudan formally committed itself to a broad range of international and regional child rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. These commitments were accompanied by the development of national legislative and policy frameworks intended to align domestic governance arrangements with international child rights standards.

At the constitutional and statutory levels, child protection was incorporated into:

- the Interim Constitution of 2005
- the Child Act of 2010
- sectoral policies addressing health, education, social welfare, and protection

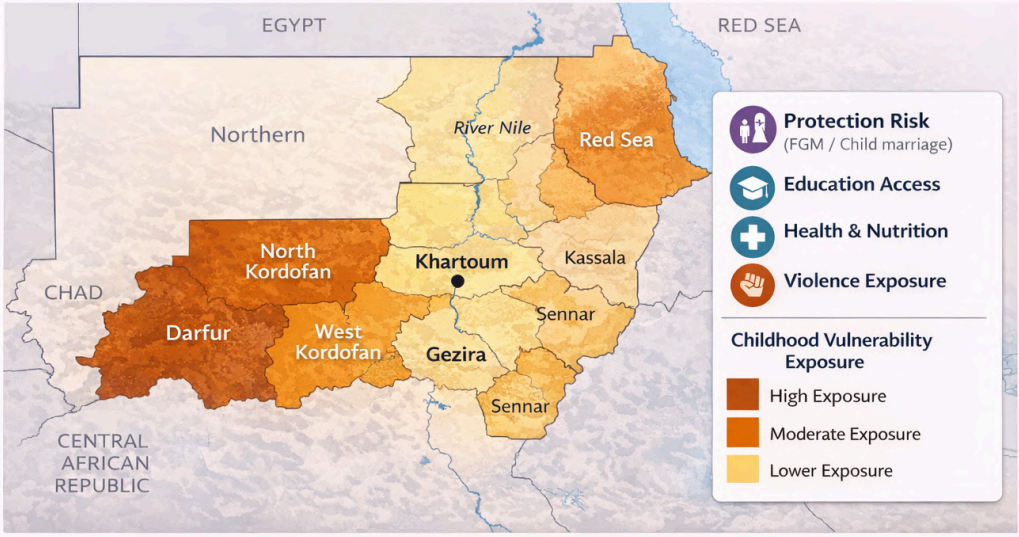
Institutional responsibilities for implementation were formally distributed across federal and state levels in accordance with Sudan's decentralized governance structure.

Despite the establishment of this normative framework, available evidence indicates that policy adoption was not consistently accompanied by operational integration or enforcement mechanisms. A persistent divergence therefore emerged between formal policy commitments and the actual provision of child-related services at sub-national and community levels.

4.2 State-Level Disparities in Childhood Outcomes

Sub-national disparities in childhood outcomes remain a defining feature of Sudan's service delivery landscape. Variations in education access, nutritional status, and exposure to harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM/C reflect uneven institutional reach and infrastructure distribution across states.

Regional outcome differentials are closely associated with socio-economic vulnerability, conflict exposure, and limitations in local administrative capacity.

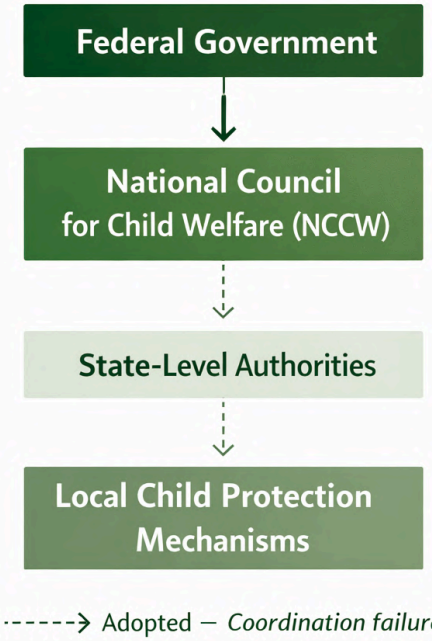


Regional disparities across protection outcomes and service access indicators reflect uneven institutional capacity to operationalize childhood policy frameworks across sub-national governance levels.

Figure 4.3 – Sub-National Disparities in Childhood Protection and Basic Service Outcomes

Geographic disparities in childhood outcomes indicate the need for territorially differentiated policy implementation mechanisms.

4.3 Institutional & Governance Mechanisms



The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), established in 1991 and re-mandated under the 2008 Act, serves as the principal governmental coordination mechanism responsible for planning, monitoring, and inter-sectoral alignment of child-related policies.

Institutional responsibilities for implementation are formally distributed across federal and state levels in accordance with Sudan's decentralized governance structure.

However, the decentralization of service delivery responsibilities introduced operational complexities that limited coordination across governance tiers. In several instances, sub-national authorities lacked the technical and financial capacity required to operationalize national policy frameworks

Figure 4.4 – Institutional and Governance Mechanisms

EVIDENCE NOTE

Policy implementation challenges observed during the study period were primarlly systemic trather programamic, reflecting, refleecting deficiencies in institutional corrdination, architecture, and context-sensitive policy design.

4.4 Strategic Policy Instruments

Between 2008 and 2018, multiple national strategies and policy instruments were adopted, including:

- the National Plan to Combat Violence against Children (2008)
- the National Policy for Children in Street Situations (2009)
- the National Policy for Parental Care (2011)
- the National Strategy for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (2008–2018)

These instruments collectively sought to establish a comprehensive protection environment addressing violence, neglect, exploitation, and harmful traditional practices.

While the policy landscape expanded significantly during this period, coordination across thematic strategies remained limited. Sector-specific interventions were frequently implemented in isolation, resulting in fragmented service delivery pathways and duplicative institutional mandates.

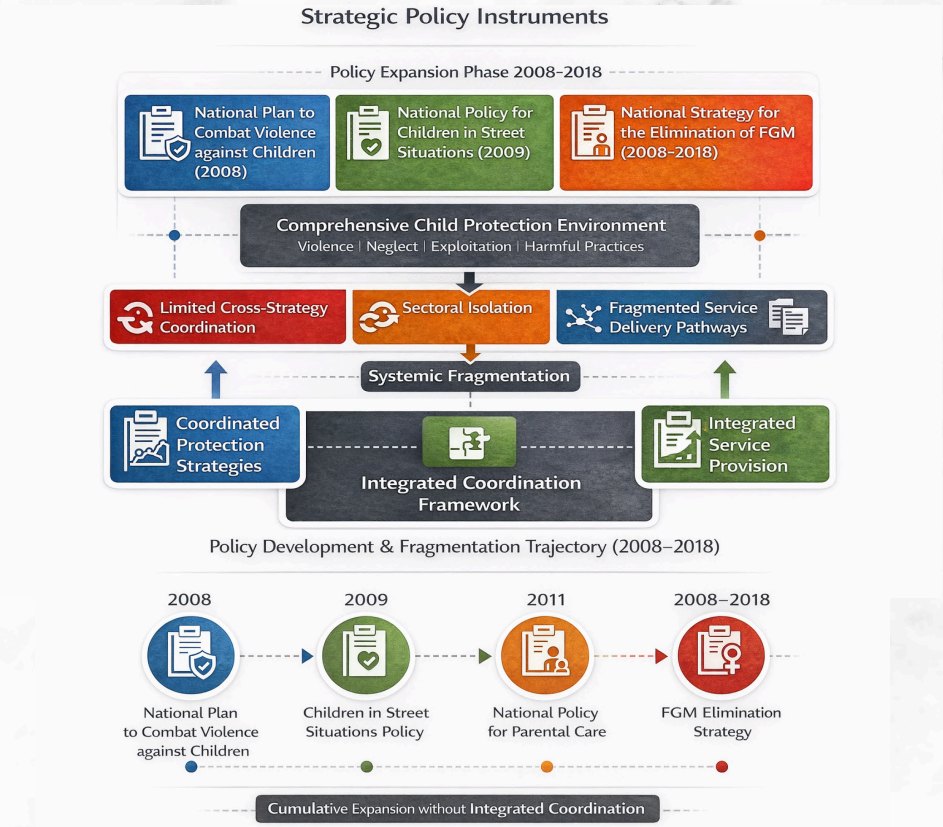


Figure 4.5 – A Decade of Progress (2008–2018): National Strategies and Policy Instruments

4.5 Policy Coherence and Implementation Gaps

National survey data indicate that FGM/C affects a substantial proportion of girls and women.
Approximately one-third of women are married before the age of 18.

A central finding of this policy gap analysis concerns the continued reliance on a basic-needs approach to childhood policy formulation. Although this approach facilitated the expansion of welfare-oriented interventions, it did not establish enforceable state obligations toward the realization of child rights as legal entitlements.

Consequently:

- policy objectives were not consistently linked to operational activities;
- implementation remained discretionary rather than compulsory;
- stakeholder participation in policy design was limited;
- cost-containment considerations frequently shaped service provision priorities.

This orientation contributed to a structural gap between the principles articulated in international and national child rights instruments and their practical application within governance systems.

Policy Gap Matrix

Childhood Policy Implementation (2010–2018)

Policy Commitment	Institutional Mandate	Implementation Constraint	Observed Gap
Child Act (2010)	NCCW	State-level capacity limitations	Uneven enforcement
Violence Plan (2008)	Multi-sectoral agencies	Lack of coordination	Fragmented response
Street Children Policy (2009)	Social Welfare Ministry	Limited outreach	Inconsistent access
Parental Care Policy (2011)	NCCW	Resource constraints	Partial implementation
FGM Strategy (2008–2018)	Federal health institutions	No federal criminal law	Weak deterrence
International CRC Commitments	Federal & State actors	Monitoring gaps	Implementation discretion

Policy Commitment · Institutional Mandate · Implementiation Constraint · Observed Gap

Figure 4.6 – Policy Gap Matrix: Childhood Implementation (2010–2018)

KEY GAPS EMERGING

- Policy objectives not consistently linked to operational activities
- Implememtation remains discritonary trather compuosly
- Staketelueer participation in policy design is limited

4.6 Structural and Operational Deficiencies

Comparative assessment indicates that policy implementation challenges were primarily systemic rather than programmatic in nature. Key deficiencies included:

Implicit and Explicit Exclusion Mechanisms

Certain policy and economic practices contributed to the exclusion of vulnerable children from legal protections and essential services, particularly in contexts of child labour or informal employment.

Technical Limitations in Policy Design

Policy formulation processes often did not adequately incorporate social variables or community-level inputs, limiting responsiveness to contextual realities.

Fragmented Protection Architecture

Institutional responsibilities for child protection were distributed across multiple agencies without a unified coordination framework.

Limited Public Communication Capacity

Media engagement with child rights issues remained insufficient, reducing the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns addressing harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM/C.

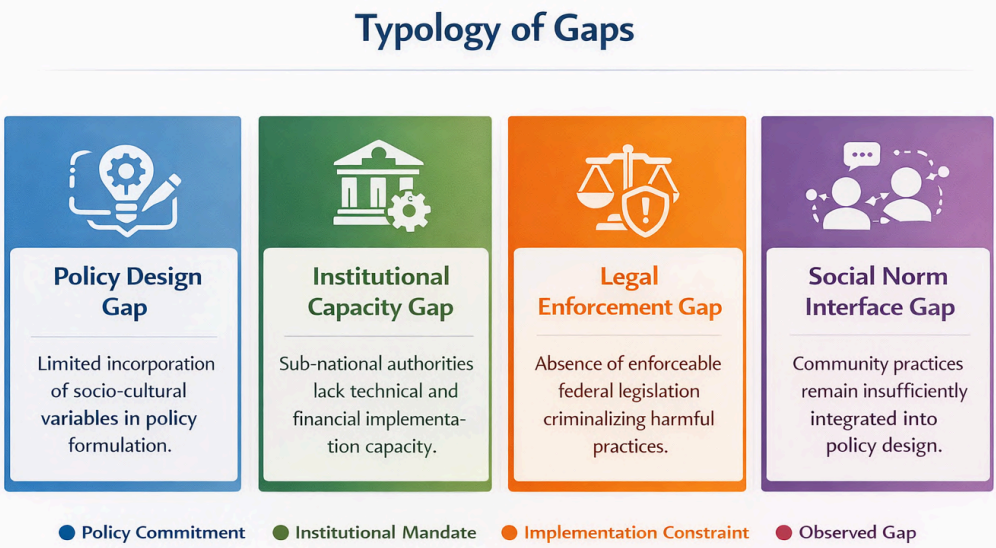


Figure 4.7 – Typology of Structural Gaps

EVIDENCE NOTE

Policy implementation challenges observed during the study period were primarlly systemic trather programamic, reflecting, refleecting deficiencies in institutional corrdination, architecture, and context-sensitive policy design.

4.7 Forward Policy Orientation

Efforts to strengthen childhood policy systems require a shift from protection-based welfare provision toward a rights-based governance framework that integrates:

- legislative reform
- institutional coordination
- enforcement mechanisms
- preventive policy instruments

In particular, the absence of federal legislation explicitly criminalizing harmful practices such as female genital mutilation during the study period illustrates the limitations of normative policy commitments in the absence of enforceable regulatory provisions.

Effective policy reform must therefore prioritize:

- legal harmonization with international obligations;
- implementation monitoring mechanisms;
- community-level reporting structures;
- sustained public awareness initiatives.

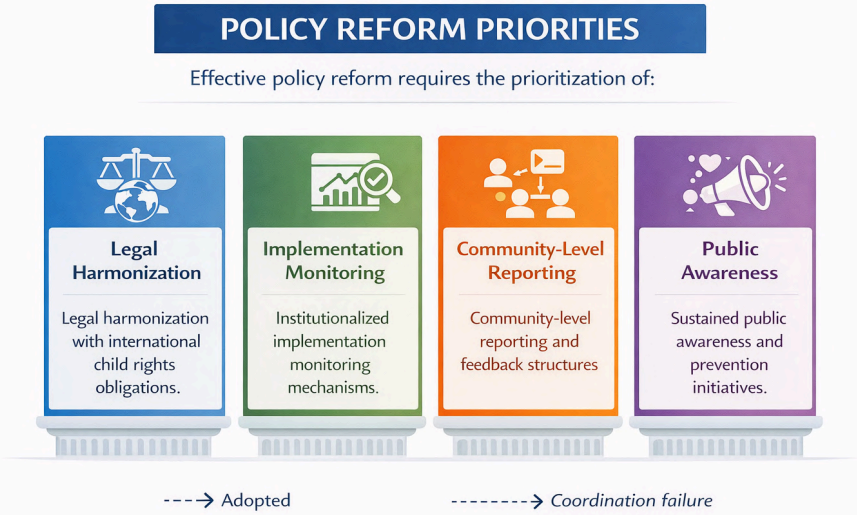


Figure 4.8 – Policy Reform Priorities

4.8 Policy Analysis Synthesis

The Sudanese childhood policy framework between 2010 and 2018 reflects a pattern of regulatory expansion without corresponding institutional consolidation. While legislative and strategic instruments addressing child welfare were introduced, governance arrangements for implementation remained fragmented across sectors and administrative levels.
As a result, childhood policy outcomes were shaped less by the existence of formal commitments than by the capacity of institutional actors to coordinate service delivery and enforce regulatory standards within decentralized governance environments.

4.9 Key Analytical Remarks

The policy gaps identified in this study are primarily attributable to:

- insufficient alignment between policy objectives and implementation mechanisms;
- decentralized governance without adequate institutional capacity;
- reliance on welfare-oriented programming rather than enforceable rights-based approaches;
- limited integration of socio-cultural dynamics in policy formulation.

Addressing these gaps requires a systemic reconfiguration of childhood policy systems to ensure coherence between legal frameworks, institutional

4.10 Policy Analysis Synthesis

The childhood policy framework in Sudan during the period under review reflects a pattern of regulatory expansion without corresponding institutional consolidation.
While legislative and strategic instruments addressing child protection were introduced, governance arrangements for implementation remained fragmented across sectors and administrative levels.
As a result, childhood policy outcomes were shaped less by the existence of formal commitments than by the institutional capacity to coordinate service delivery and enforce regulatory standards within decentralized governance environments.

Implementation Capacity

Additional implementation challenges identified during the study period included limited media engagement in child protection advocacy, the absence of enforceable federal legislation addressing harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, and structural constraints affecting policy monitoring and service delivery for children in vulnerable situations, including homelessness and displacement

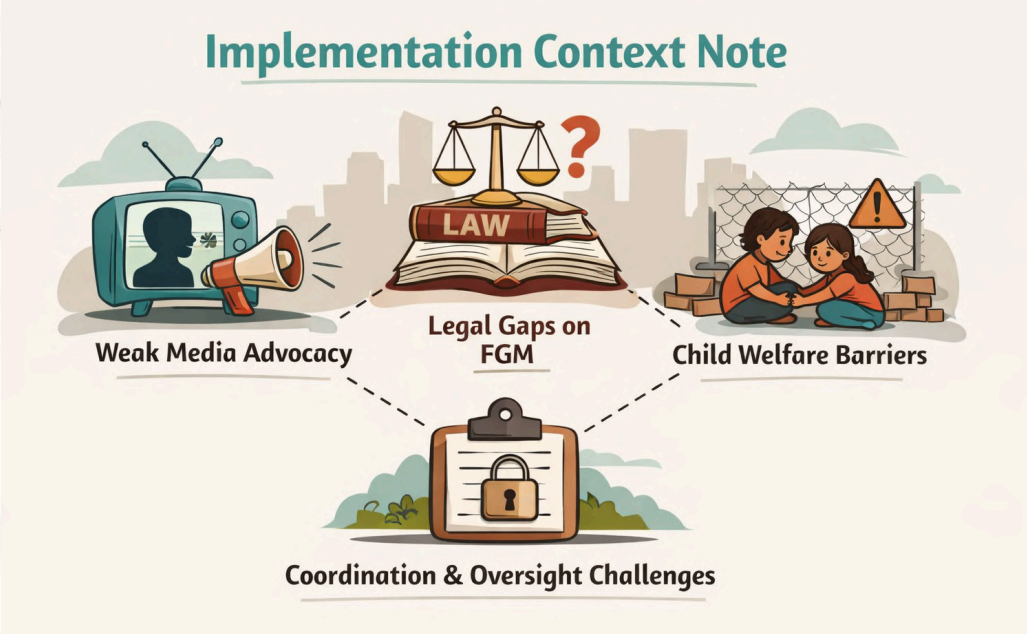


Figure 4.9 – Implementation Capacity Context

PART FIVE - Stakeholder Engagement

5.1 Stakeholder Engagement Process

involving multiple institutional and non-institutional actors whose roles, expectations, and interactions directly influence policy outcomes. Stakeholder engagement during the period under review reflects the extent to which policy frameworks were operationalized through inter-agency collaboration, community-level participation, and civil society involvement.

The engagement process involved governmental institutions responsible for policy formulation, sub-national authorities tasked with implementation, civil society organizations engaged in service provision and advocacy, as well as families and community-based structures acting as primary caregivers and informal protection mechanisms.

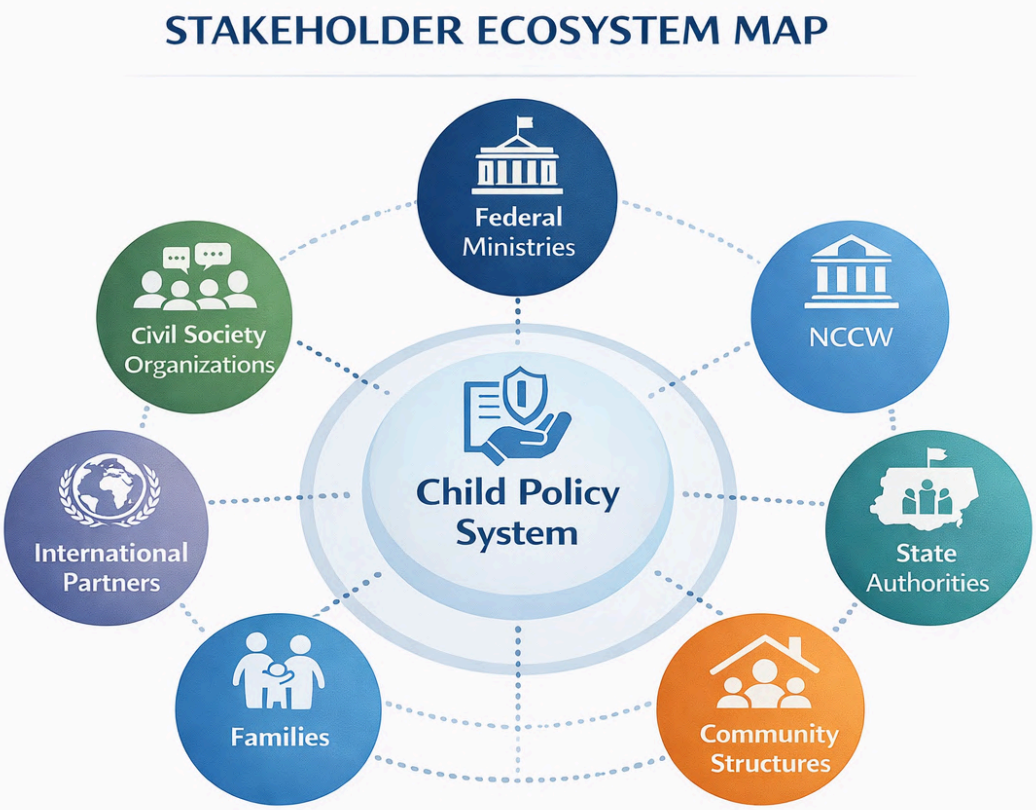


Figure 5.1 – Stakeholder Ecosystem Map

5.2 Stakeholder Consultation Process

The stakeholder consultation process aimed to assess institutional perspectives regarding policy coherence, implementation feasibility, and coordination mechanisms across governance levels.
Differences in stakeholder understanding of policy objectives and operational responsibilities were identified as contributing factors to fragmented implementation pathways and weakened accountability structures within childhood policy systems.

Stakeholder Role Matrix

Stakeholder Role Matrix

Stakeholder	Policy Role	Implementation Role	Coordination Constraint
Federal Ministries	Federal policy makers, set national standards and frameworks.	—	Centralized decision making limits regional input
NCCW	Central coordination body for child welfare initiatives.	Facilitates policy execution and oversight	Limited authority over state and local operations
State Authorities	Adapt national policies to local contexts and priorities.	Direct implementation and local service delivery	Resource constraints and administrative barriers
Civil Society Organizations	Advocacy, advisory, and service delivery roles.	Community mobilization and program facilitation	Lack of formalized consultation and collaboration
International Partners	Provide technical and financial assistance.	Support capacity-building and service delivery	Coordination difficulties and reporting burdens
Families	—	Frontline monitors and community advocates	Inadequate support structures and communication gaps

Figure 5.2 – Stakeholder Role Matrix

5.3 Stakeholder Consultation Findings

Stakeholder feedback indicates that coordination gaps between national policy frameworks and sub-national implementation structures were among the most significant challenges affecting service delivery outcomes. Institutional fragmentation, limited communication channels, and overlapping mandates were identified as key governance dynamics constraining policy effectiveness.

Stakeholder Influence–Interest Grid

Figure 5.3 – Stakeholder Influence–Interest Grid

5.4 Stakeholder Coordination Dynamics

Childhood policy implementation requires sustained coordination between institutional actors operating across governance levels.
However, stakeholder engagement during the study period was characterized by limited vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms, particularly between federal policy-making bodies and sub-national implementation authorities.
Overlapping mandates and fragmented reporting channels further constrained collective action, thereby weakening the operationalization of child protection frameworks at community leve

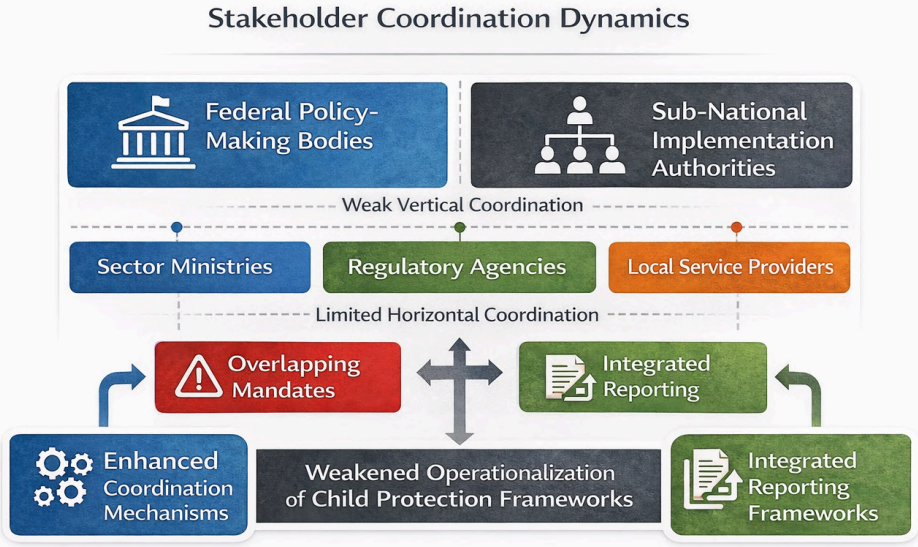


Figure 5.4 – Stakeholder Constraint Typology

5.5 Governance Constraints Identified

Governance constraints identified through stakeholder consultations included inconsistent policy interpretation across administrative levels, limited technical capacity among implementing actors, and the absence of standardized coordination protocols linking policy frameworks to service delivery systems.

These institutional limitations contributed to discrepancies between national childhood policy commitments and their practical implementation within decentralized governance environments.

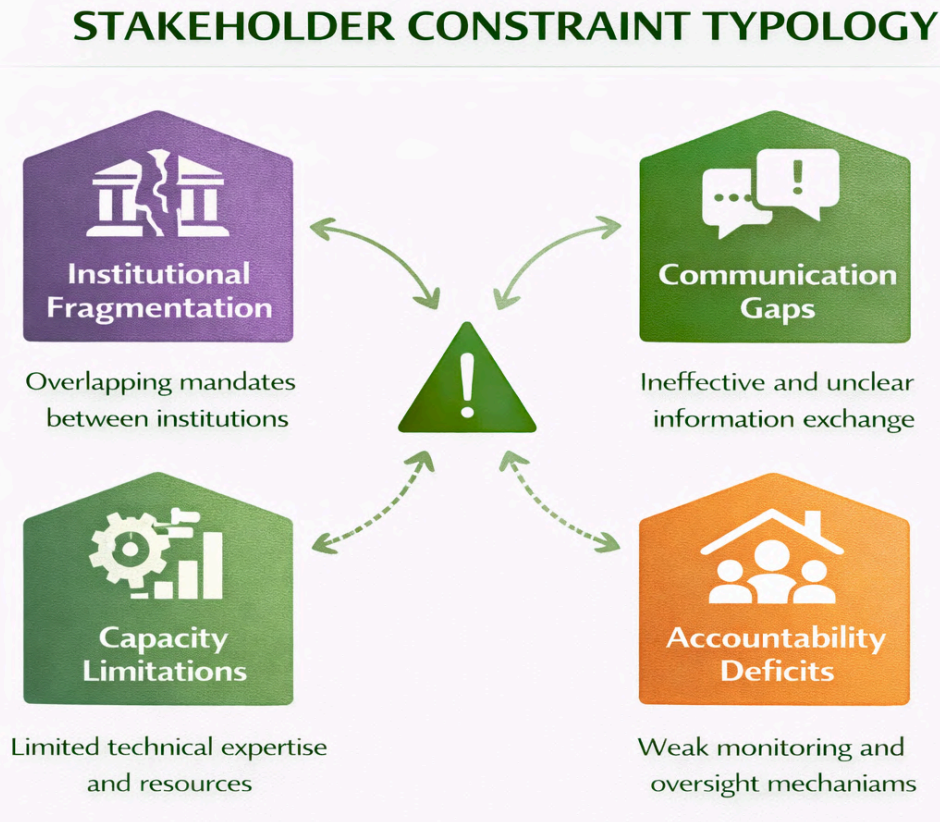


Figure 5.5 – Governance Constraints Identified

PART SIX

Strategic Reform Framework

6.1 From Rights Rhetoric to Enforceable Governance

Advancing a rights-based approach within national social protection systems requires moving beyond declaratory commitments toward enforceable regulatory and institutional mechanisms.

Rights language must be operationalized through legislative clarity, administrative accountability, budgetary alignment, and institutional coordination across governance levels.

Figure 6.1 – Strategic Reform Framework

6.2 Legislative Harmonization and Regulatory Reform

National legal frameworks should explicitly recognize social protection and essential economic and social rights as enforceable entitlements rather than discretionary policy objectives.

Legislative reform should:

- Clarify institutional mandates
- Establish enforcement provisions
- Provide complaint and redress mechanisms
- Ensure non-discrimination safeguards

Where regulatory gaps exist, particularly in areas affecting vulnerable populations, federal-level legislation should be strengthened to ensure consistency across decentralized governance structures.

Legislative Reform Priority Map

Legal Mandates | Rights Enforcement | Non-Discrimination

Figure 6.2 – Legislative Reform Priority Map

6.3 Integrated Social Protection Systems

Fragmentation across social protection programmes limits effectiveness and weakens impact.
Reform efforts should prioritize the transition from programme-based interventions to integrated social protection systems that ensure coordination between policy design, financing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

This includes:

- Cross-programme interoperability
- Inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms
- Unified beneficiary identification systems

6.4 Institutional Capacity and Data Governance

.

Reform priorities include:

- Development of disaggregated statistical systems
- Strengthening national statistics offices
- Institutionalizing monitoring indicators aligned with human rights standards
- Building technical capacity across ministries

Without reliable, disaggregated data, vulnerable groups remain structurally invisible within policy systems.

Figure 6.3 – Institutional Capacity Framework

6.5 Financing, Fiscal Alignment, and Sustainability

Sustainable realization of economic and social rights requires adequate and progressive fiscal frameworks.

Reform should:

- Align tax policy with equity principles
- Broaden the tax base
- Reduce evasion
- Ensure predictable social expenditure allocation

Budgetary commitments must correspond to stated rights obligations.

Figure 6.4 – Financing, Fiscal Alignment, and Sustainability Model

6.6 Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Policy Design

Social protection systems are not gender-neutral and must be designed to address structural discrimination.

Policy reform should:

- Integrate gender-responsive budgeting
- Expand care infrastructure
- Support employment access for women and youth
- Address unpaid care burdens

Inclusive design requires affirmative measures targeting marginalized populations.

Figure 6.5 – Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Policy Design Wheel

6.7 Employment and Labour Rights Alignment

Employment accessibility remains a structural determinant of social protection effectiveness.

Regulatory reform should:

- Ensure safe and equitable working conditions
- Expand social security affiliation
- Remove structural barriers affecting women and youth

Labour policy must align with human rights obligations.

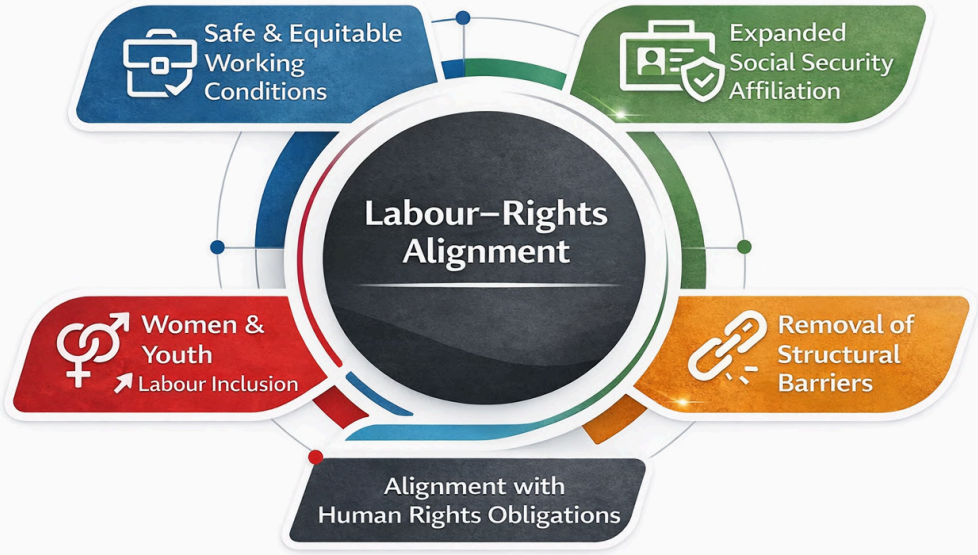


Figure 6.6 – Employment Accessibility Reform Flow

6.8 Quality Public Service Provision

Governments retain ultimate responsibility for ensuring availability, accessibility, adequacy, and quality of public services, including where private providers are involved.
Regulatory oversight mechanisms should be strengthened to prevent service exclusion and abuse.

Figure 6.7 – Public Service Quality Assurance Model

6.9 Participation, Transparency, and Accountability

A rights-based governance framework requires institutionalized mechanisms for participation, access to information, and civic oversight.

Reform should include

- Access-to-information procedures
- Institutionalized consultation platforms
- Protection of civil society actors
- Human rights impact assessments

Substantive equality requires removing structural barriers to participation.

Figure 6.8 – Participation, Transparency, and Accountability Governance Flow

6.10 Essential Freedoms and Access to Social Participation

Access to essential freedoms and meaningful participation remains a necessary condition for the effective operationalization of childhood protection frameworks.
Policy systems that do not safeguard freedom of association, access to information, and community-level participation risk excluding vulnerable populations from protective service environments.

Reform priorities should therefore include:

- Strengthening access-to-information procedures within child protection service systems
- Institutionalizing participatory planning mechanisms at federal and state levels
- Ensuring the safe engagement of civil society actors in policy monitoring processes
- Integrating human rights impact assessments within service delivery evaluation frameworks

Expanding participatory access supports accountability and enhances the responsiveness of childhood policy implementation mechanisms across governance tiers.

PART SEVEN

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Legislative Reform

- Introduce federal-level legislation criminalizing harmful practices affecting children, including female genital mutilation, to ensure regulatory consistency across states.
- Amend existing child protection laws to incorporate enforceable monitoring and reporting provisions.
- Institutionalize complaint and redress mechanisms for violations of child protection policies.

7.2 Institutional Coordination

- Establish inter-ministerial coordination platforms for child protection policy implementation.
- Develop unified beneficiary identification systems across social protection programmes.
- Introduce national-level monitoring frameworks aligned with international human rights standards.

7.3 Data and Monitoring Systems

- Strengthen national statistical systems to enable disaggregated data collection by gender, age, disability, and geographic location.
- Institutionalize performance indicators for evaluating policy effectiveness.
- Introduce human rights impact assessments within policy evaluation procedures.

Policy Implementation Roadmap

CONCLUSION

This Policy Gap Analysis underscores the imperative of moving beyond formal policy commitments toward enforceable institutional arrangements capable of addressing the structural determinants of childhood vulnerability in Sudan.

Although notable efforts have been undertaken to expand child protection legislation and social protection programming, implementation outcomes remain constrained by governance fragmentation, uneven institutional capacity, fiscal limitations, and insufficiently integrated monitoring systems. The persistence of these structural constraints reflects a misalignment between regulatory ambition and operational readiness across governance levels.

Advancing a rights-based childhood policy architecture requires coordinated legislative reform, sustainable and predictable financing mechanisms, strengthened data governance infrastructures, and institutionalized accountability frameworks. Equally critical is the meaningful inclusion of civil society actors and affected communities in policy design, oversight, and evaluation processes.

Sustainable reform will ultimately depend not on the expansion of policy instruments alone, but on the consolidation of governance coherence, administrative accountability, and enforceable rights-based mechanisms that translate policy intent into equitable and measurable outcomes for children across all regions of Sudan.

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Annex I:

Legal Alignment of Childhood Protection Frameworks (2010–2018)

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CRC Obligation	Sudan's Constitution	Sudan's 2005 Constitution	Sudan Legislation/Policy	Alignment Status
Specific Legal Framework/ Implementation Measures *(Article 4)*	ARTICLE 32: Rights of youth and children	Child Act 2010, General Principles Part 3	Child Act 2010, General Principles Part 3	Partial Alignment
Harmful Traditional Practices (FGM/C Ban) *(Article 24.3)*	ARTICLE 32 (2): States the need to protect children	Child Act 2010, States the minimum age	Child Act 2010, Article 13	Aligned
Child Marriage *(Article 24.3)*	ARTICLE 15: States marriage is based upon free will and consent	Child Act 2010, Section 24 states 18 years being minimum marrige age but open states for exceptions	Child Act 2010, Article 22	Partial Alignment
Child Labour Prohibition *(Article 32.2)*				Aligned

Annex II: Methodological and Comparative Extraction Framework

Dimension	Case Study Insight	Extracted Policy Feature	Relevance to Sudan
Legal Alignment for Child Protection	National law compreheisively aligns with CRC	Incorporation of CRC principles into national legal frameworks and regular evaluation	Existing gaps between legal frameworks and implementation
Financial Commitment Social Sectors	Social sector budget prioritization and protection	Mandated minimum allazaton for child-related policies and multi-year spending strategy	Inconsistent funding and priorty allocations
Institutional Coordination Structure	Centralized child protection authoritly with inter-ministerial task forces	Creation of high-level, cross sectoral child protection governance body.	Fragmented and inefficient mecalianisms

Note: Annexes 1 and II provide the legal and methodological foundations underpinning the policy gap analysis framework applied in this study.

Annex I:

Legal Alignment of Childhood Protection Frameworks in Sudan (2010–2018)

Policy Instrument	Legal Basis	Implementation Mechanism
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Ratified by Sudan (1990)	Incorporated through national policy frameworks and sectoral strategies
Interim National Constitution (2005)	Constitutional recognition of child rights and protection principles.	Distributed implementation responiibilities across federal and state governance levels
Child Act (2010)	Statutory child protection framework	Institutionalized through federal and state-level child protection bodies
National Plan to Combat Violence Against Children (2008)	National policy instrument	Implemented through multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms
National Policy for Parental Care (2011)	Policy-level commitment	Integrated into social welfare service delivery structures
National Policy for Children in Street Situations (2009)	Programmatic framework	Delivered through social protection and rehabilitation services
National Strategy for the Elimination of FGM (2008–2018)	Strategic policy commitment	Implemented through awareness programmes and community-based interventions

Annex II:

Institutional Roles and Implementation Responsibilities

Institution	Mandate	Governance Level	Implementation Role
National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW)	National policy coordination and acesy	Federal	Oversees national strategies and inter-agency coordination
Ministry of Social Development	Child protection services and welfare	Federal & State	Manages child welfare and support services
Ministry of Health	Maternal and child health services	Federal & State	Delivers health programs for children and mothers

Note Annexes 1 and II present the legal and institutonal architecture underpinning the policy gap analysis framework.

Annex III:

Macroeconomic and Public Expenditure Indicators (2012–20116)

Table A2: Public Expenditure on Social Sectors (2012–2015)

Sector	2012	2013	2014	2015	Unit
Health	239,7	374	536	1,190	Million SDG
Education	111	140	227	244	Million SDG
Welfare & Social Security	3,344.70	4,281,60	5,618.40	6,425	Million SDG
Total Social Sectors	**3,695.40**	**4,795.60**	**6,381.40**	**7,859**	Million SDG
Total Public Budget Expenditure	29,800	40,700	51,900	61,500	Million SDG
% of Total Budget	**12.40%**	**11.90%**	**12.20%**	**12.80%**	%

Note: Data for 2016 is not available for social sector breakdown.

Annex IV: Child Protection and Social Outcome Indicators (2012–2016)

Table A4: Child Protection and Social Outcome Indicators (2012–2016)

Indicator	Year	Key Finding	Policy Relevance
FGM/C Prevalence	2014	High national prevalence with state variation	Legal enforcement gap
Marriage before 18	2014	~ one-third nationally	Structural poverty determinant
Violence against children	2016	State-level disparities	Protection system weakness
Basic service access	2012–2016	Uneven sub-national coverage	Fiscal & capacity constraint

Note: Annexes III and IV contextualize implementation capacity within macroeconomic constraints and child protection outcome indicators, informing the structural gap assessment presented in Part Four.

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies **(ACJPS)** is a non-profit, non-governmental organization working to monitor and promote respect for human rights and legal reform in Sudan. ACJPS has a vision of a Sudan where all people can live and prosper free from fear and want in a state committed to justice, equality and peace.

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