**Empowering Sudan: The Crucial Role of Women in Peace Processes**

Sudan, a nation marked by a history of conflict, underscores the vital importance of achieving lasting peace. This narrative explores the multifaceted role of women in Sudan, emphasizing their potential as catalysts for positive change in building a sustainable and inclusive peace. With women constituting half of Sudan's population, their active participation is not just a matter of equality but a strategic imperative.

**Women's activism amidst crisis**

Women in Sudan have a rich history of political activism, often playing pivotal roles during critical junctures. Despite this, their contributions have not translated into official recognition in political processes or substantive representation in government. The recent crisis since April 2023 witnessed women actively responding to the violence, forming coalitions and movements such as Women Against the War. These groups, comprising prominent advocates and human rights activists, utilized social media and on-the-ground initiatives to document human rights violations and provide crucial support to internally displaced people.

**International collaboration for peace**

A significant moment in Sudanese women's pursuit of peace occurred recently in November 2023 in Cairo , where over 20 women-led initiatives and coalitions from diverse backgrounds convened. Organized by UN Women, UNITAMS, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), and Inclusive Peace, the meeting aimed to enhance coordination among women's groups. The event provided a platform for exploring advocacy concepts, collaboration mechanisms, and future activities. The gathering showcased the potential of international collaboration in amplifying the voices of Sudanese women for peace.

**Women in Juba Peace Talks**

The Juba peace talks, symptomatic of Sudan's transitional period, witnessed the exclusion of Sudanese women, leading to the Juba Agreement for Peace. Despite eventual representation, women faced challenges in being excluded from formal negotiations. The gender inclusiveness of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) varied across tracks, with the Darfur Agreement standing out as the most gender-inclusive. The inadequate representation of women in these talks underscores the need for genuine inclusion, not merely symbolic representation.

**Historical perspectives**

Reflecting on past peace processes, such as the Darfur Peace Agreement and the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), illustrates the successful influence of women. In Darfur, effective advocacy, communication strategies, and international support enabled women to formulate a pro-women agenda. However, the incomplete implementation of CPA provisions in Southern Sudan showcased the challenges of translating legal frameworks into meaningful change.

**Legal framework and gender discrimination**

Sudan's intricate legal framework, deeply rooted in Islamic Sharia traditions, has faced criticism for discriminatory practices against women. The non-ratification of the Maputo Protocol and CEDAW raises concerns about legal safeguards for women. Sudan's reluctance to fully embrace these international instruments hampers progress in reproductive health, gender-based violence protection, and overall gender equality. Reconsideration of these instruments is crucial to align Sudan's legal framework with regional commitments.

While considerable progress has been made, the full potential of women's participation in peace processes in Sudan remains unrealized. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts to create an environment where women actively contribute to shaping Sudan's future, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable society.

Recommendations

* Amplify Women's Representation: Ensure substantive representation of women in peace negotiations, providing them with a meaningful role in shaping Sudan's future.
* Legal Reforms: Urgently ratify the Maputo Protocol and domesticate CEDAW to provide comprehensive legal protection for women, aligning Sudan's laws with international standards.
* International Support: Collaborate with international organizations for sustained efforts in advancing women's rights, including capacity-building programs.
* Public Awareness: Promote awareness of women's contributions to peace, challenging stereotypes and biases that hinder their active participation.
* Capacity Building: Invest in capacity-building initiatives to empower women in leadership and advocacy roles, ensuring they have the skills and resources to effect change.

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