

Strategic Initiative for Women
in the Horn of Africa

Annual Report

2020 and 2021



Strategic Initiative
for Women in the
Horn of Africa



SIHA Network



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Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa

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Women receiving vocational training in Sudan
Photography: Ahmad Mahmoud



A Message from the **SIHA Management Team**

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It is our pleasure as the SIHA management team to share with you our report for 2020 and 2021 of our journey of successes and challenges and learning throughout the two years.

The past two years have been extremely intense. In addition to the ramifications of COVID-19, the shrinking of civic space and the polarised political environments in the region have caused greater instability and turmoil, particularly in Sudan and Ethiopia.

Against all odds, in different countries across the region, women have been asserting their agency and claiming leadership and decision-making roles, despite these efforts, violence against women and inequalities persist.

Beginning in 2020 and throughout 2021, SIHA has been experiencing significant growth in terms of projects and workload and thus expansion in the size of the operation and human resources. Having said that, SIHA continues to be a southern-based institution that is surviving on projects-based funding, with very limited access to unrestricted funds to utilise for institutional development and sustainability.

As the SIHA management team, we would like to appreciate the commitments of the SIHA team, particularly their diligence and hard work in supporting women and girls in civil society and grassroots activists across the region. Despite limited resources SIHA has managed to have a remarkable group of staff who are trying their best under political, economic, and environmental challenges.

We remain grateful to our extremely supportive board of directors and advisors for their

collaboration and commitment to SIHA and its future in the region. SIHA's work and engagement are becoming more trusted and appreciated by grassroots women activists, particularly the younger generation of women activists and feminists. In 2021 our membership base expanded further, especially in Sudan and Ethiopia. We also take pride in our growth and the national, regional, and international recognition that we are enjoying as a feminist institution in this troubled region of the greater Horn of Africa.

SIHA's research and knowledge-sharing work is influencing the narrative, establishing awareness, and informing policy change across the greater Horn of Africa. We are especially proud of how our work is informing feminist research and shaping the awareness of a broad base of women and men. Over the past two years, SIHA has produced a number of research papers, and manuals for practitioners, teachers, lawyers and community mediators, along with our annual journal *Women in Islam*, a unique collection of articles, artwork, and prose that has attracted hundreds of readers from around the globe.

Despite all the difficulties and limitations, SIHA has continued to lead in its advocacy work and to expose the escalating violence against women and girls. Our advocacy is intentional in empowering women and girls in the region as it reflects their voices and tells their/our stories and the situation of women and girls. We also believe that our advocacy agenda and work are influencing the response and the engagement of many regional, national, and international actors.

Our advocacy work with diverse groups of women's rights defenders and women and girl leaders, as individuals and members of organisations and groups emphasises that women have political and civil rights equal to men

and that their engagement in politics is central to any possible change toward stability, democracy and peace in the region.

It is important to note that SIHA's rapid growth comes at the expense of heavy compliance procedures and higher management requirements. The SIHA Regional Director and Management team are spread thin across SIHA's six operation locations, making it challenging to invest in institutional development. Having said that, we certainly believe that it is extremely important to invest in staffing and expertise that will support SIHA human resource management and extend support to the SIHA team across the different countries and in the regional office.

Finally, at SIHA we are working on improving our commitment to diversity, among the women's movement across the region. We feel that we have many limitations and challenges to overcome on that front, as we continue to struggle and rise up to be a diverse institution that reflects the diversity of the movements across the region. The concept of intersectionality is key in our work and commitment to women and communities across the region. The intersectional approach remains critical for acknowledging the layers and complexity of repression, alienation, and violence that women and girls are experiencing in this region.

SIHA Management Team



Market vendor in Arua, Uganda
Photography: SIHA Staff

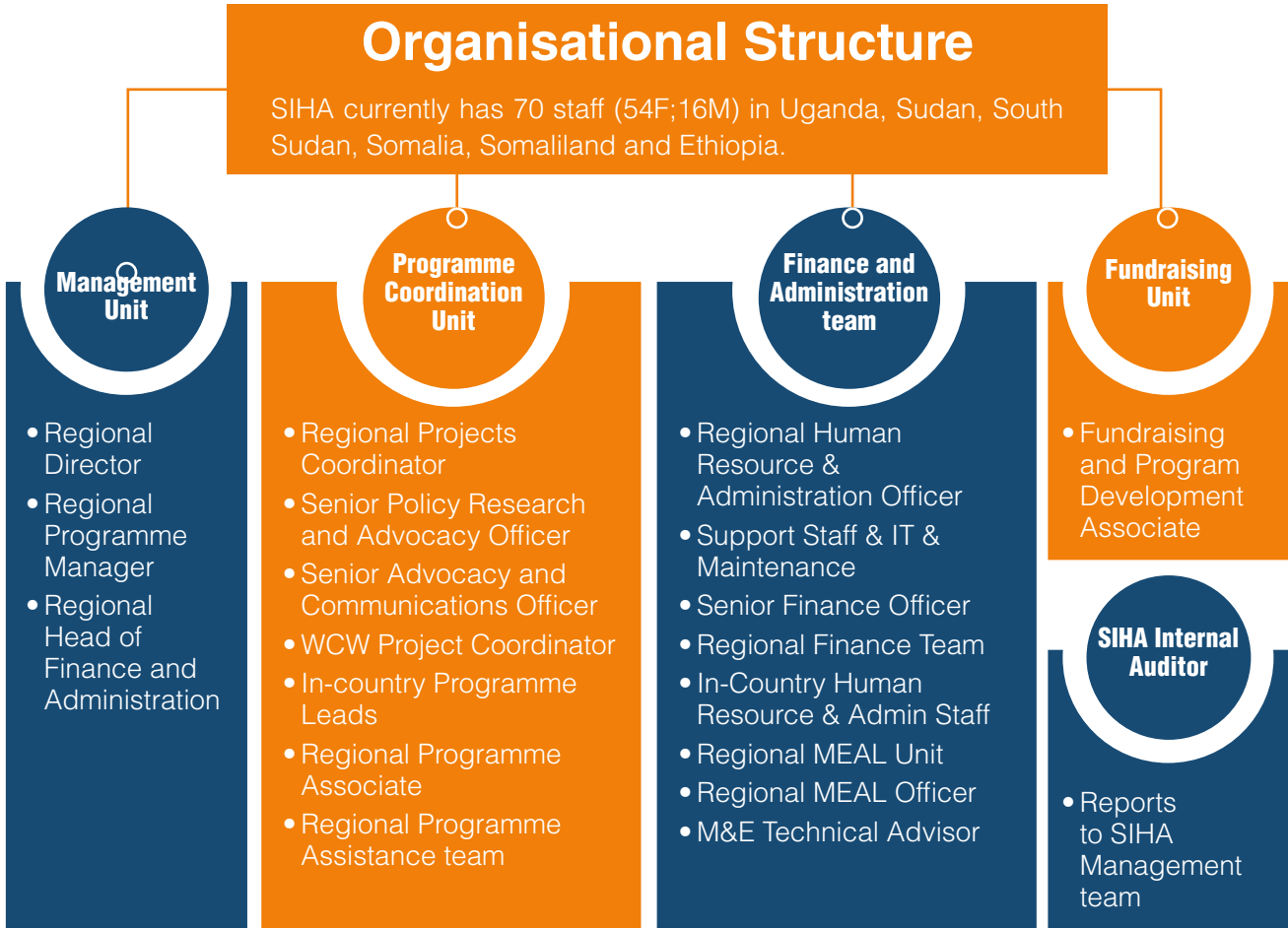


Human Resources & Organisational Behaviour Report

SIHA is committed to maintaining a workspace in adherence with its mission and values, as a space free of discrimination and harassment, where equal rights and gender equity are championed.

1. Staff Structure and Talent Development

SIHA's Human Resources team works to implement fair and equitable processes to ensure the safety and equity of all staff while also working to increase the effectiveness of SIHA's work.



Human resources development

SIHA is a growing organisation and is responding to its long-term vision and expanding scope of activities by creating new staff functions. The majority of staff are on permanent contracts. Temporary employees are recruited based on project funding.

SIHA through its partnership with HorizonT3000 was given a form of grant support through a Technical Assistant who supports the Monitoring and Evaluation functions of the organisation.

1. Team building activities

At SIHA we encourage and promote teamwork and one of the ways we do this is through team building activities. Once a year, staff are brought in from across the region to the Regional Office where we discuss, exchange ideas on the progress of the past period and how best to improve but we also have fun activities in place that promote trust, confidence and togetherness within the organisation. Most recently in February 2022, a team of close to 23 staff were brought in to attend a staff retreat that focused around team building, protection and security training, monitoring and evaluation training, and advocacy.

As part of our team building efforts, we organise monthly staff meetings, during which we discuss each other's past achievements and what we will each be working on, this encourages staff to render support to each other and also understand what we are each working on for the week.

We also hold Programme Coordination Unit meetings once a month and this brings together all key staff within the different countries in which

SIHA operates, these meetings are a reflection of what each one has been engaged in, the progress of the activities, tasks and programmes and the way forward in terms of deadlines and achievements, this supports maintaining open lines of communication across departments.

2. Collective management approach

At SIHA we have defined collective leadership as a group of people working together toward a shared goal through collaborative effort. We work to ensure that staff are internally and externally motivated, as management we encourage all staff to work together towards a shared vision and we recognize that lasting success is not possible without diverse perspectives and contributions.

SIHA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, our first concerns were the welfare of our staff, beneficiaries, members and partners. To continue the engagements, we ensured that all staff had laptops, work stations, and internet available to enable the continued work obligation fulfilment, contact with the concerned parties and encouraging work morale.

We engaged in weekly staff meetings where we all shared and tried to understand the needs of staff, their mental needs, physical needs as well as emotional needs and through these calls, we encouraged one another.

A policy on COVID-19 was developed as a guide on what precautions and measures we all needed to take and this was adopted across all offices.

3. Expansion to different regions in the countries of operation

a) Sudan

Our operations have expanded to greater parts of Sudan; Bule Nile, Senar, El Jazira, North and South Darfur with staff representation in each of these locations.

b) South Sudan

SIHA is represented in Juba and Wau with staff representation

c) Uganda

SIHA has an office in Kampala and one in Arua and is operating in the Karamoja region as well.

d) Somalia

SIHA is now represented in Puntland by a focal point staff.

e) Ethiopia

We are currently concluding our registration in Ethiopia and securing an office space

4. Staff evaluation and reflections

Staff evaluations are carried out in a participatory, honest and collective spirit, while considering the organisation's accountability to its work, communities, and partners. Both the staff and the evaluation team exchange views and reflect openly and transparently upon the staff member's role and accomplishments over the evaluation period.

- This is an ongoing process aimed at improving performance. The process includes ad hoc informal reviews and formal evaluations, which are conducted twice per year for each staff member.
- The formal staff evaluation is usually attended by: immediate supervisors, a Human Resource representative, and a team member who works closely with the staff being evaluated.

5. Solidarity, collective care and ongoing field visits

This year we stood in solidarity with colleagues in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia as they faced difficult times. SIHA supported the relocation of some of the partners and staff in Somalia and Ethiopia for safety reasons, this included contribution to flights among other needs.

6. Staff Retention and Capacity Building

At SIHA, we also support staff growth and development in terms of additional knowledge acquisition through a policy we adopted referred to as the Training & Development Policy.

SIHA Network will give employees adequate training to do their job safely and competently. We encourage employees to participate and to highlight any gaps in their own skills or knowledge they believe they have. Our holistic human capital development works to improve every facet of employee performance, including communication, retention rates, employee satisfaction, and employee engagement among other factors.

At SIHA we have a policy that allows cover of 20 – 50% of trainings fees or masters' degree fees upon request, on the condition that the staff member has worked with SIHA for a period of at least one year and upon completion of the programme commit to work with SIHA for at least an additional one year.

7. Working Conditions

SIHA prioritises the health, human rights, and safety of all staff. SIHA adheres to the 1981 Convention on Occupational Safety and Health and its 2008 Protocol, the 1970 Convention on Minimum Wage Fixing and the ILO Convention on Hours of Work and follows the 2011 OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. We ensure that all equipment needed for the smooth operations of the office are provided.

Achievements

Human Resource Policy and Procedure Manual

The SIHA Human Resource manual had been in development since 2019 and was finally released in November 2021 after being officially endorsed by the Regional Board of Directors. The purpose of this HR policy document is to introduce the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) Network's management system, the administrative structure, the policies that govern the relationship between SIHA and its staff, the terms and conditions of employment, and the procedure for work done within the executive section. SIHA's Board of Directors, General assembly, and Advisory are the entities that govern SIHA's constitution.

Transitioning to online reliable systems

We have successfully had the Human Resource Information System installed and are happy to say that we are now in process of inputting data into a cloud system that can be accessed by the Human Resource Officer in Sudan and colleagues across the region where need be especially for requests for leave, salaries etc.

Collective care/Wellness

We now have a fitness program at SIHA Network - every Friday we have Zumba classes and Sukuma classes.

Internal mobility

This refers to every initiative or action related to the promotion, appointment, or hire for a position of an employee/s that are already enrolled in SIHA. At SIHA we have had staff being elevated and this is something we encourage, as this reflects mutual growth for the organisation and the staff.

Challenges

More support for our Human Resources and Administration Department

With the lack of funding to support the growing needs of our Human Resource and Administration

Department, SIHA finds it difficult to render support to the all needs of the employees', even basic needs like medical coverage and additional staff to support in the various departments. Due to the nature of our sources of funding, most funding is channelled towards project implementation with a small percentage reserved for Human Resources needs.

SIHA as a Pan-African organisation

SIHA works across different countries in the greater Horn of Africa, which face different and difficult situations. These circumstances have the potential to cause resentment amongst the country offices, but the regional office is at all times expected to demonstrate leadership and commitment at all levels.

Recruiting talented employees

Attracting talent is a huge investment of time and money. It is impossible to know from the start whether a candidate will be a good fit. This is something we can only be sure of once an employee has worked for the organisation for a period of time. SIHA does engage a hiring consultant firm on a case by case basis that provides temp-to-hire solutions that allow us to try out new employees with little to no risk. This solution saves us time and mitigates issues around conflict of interest and corruption, but we do not always have sufficient funds to use this option.

Conclusions

The work of the Human Resources and Administration Department is key to maintaining the safety and well-being of all of SIHA staff and member organisations. It is critical for SIHA to achieve its goals and mission, while also supporting its staff to the best of its abilities and always integrating the great values that SIHA holds.

2020

Executive Summary

Although the year 2020 was challenging due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and the subsequent government preventive measures which delayed program implementation, SIHA managed to realize some remarkable achievements. The failure of governments across the Greater Horn of Africa (GHOA) to provide social safety nets increased the vulnerability of women particularly those who work in the informal sector, women and girls living in conflict situations, IDP camps, and slums. Moreover, governments concentrated on Covid-19 and paid little attention to issues of violence against women and girls and women's rights and justice which deepened gender inequalities. At the height of Covid-19, the GHOA experienced unprecedented cases of violence against women and girls and limited access to rights and justice.

Nonetheless, our interventions across the GHOA increased awareness among different groups including community members, religious groups, and leaders about forms of violence against women and girls, built the capacity of women's grassroots organizations that advocate for women's rights and provide services to survivors of violence and improved community engagement, including male involvement in the fight to reduce violence against women and girls. In South Sudan, we improved access to gender-based violence (GBV) response services and created a protective environment that contributed to change of harmful and inequitable social and gender norms and behaviors that promote GBV.

Additionally, SIHA strengthened access to justice through challenging unequal power relations and religious fundamentalism. We urged governments to uphold greater control over customary courts so that they are more in line with existing human rights standards. We called for an end to the

perpetuation of discrimination by customary court chiefs. Our position papers in the GHOA highlighted the challenges faced by women and those posed by hardline religious leaders and general discrimination against women.

Cognizant of the invaluable role played by women grassroots organizations in preventing and combating violence against women and girls, we championed women's movement building across the GHOA. This helped them to leverage on their collective strength to amplify their voices on issues affecting women and girls. We profiled and built a network of 36 women's grassroots organizations in Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan and South Sudan.

This exercise helped SIHA to identify existing gaps among women's grassroots organizations, promote learning and exchange of ideas, establish women's rights defender coalitions and assess their capacity in human rights, knowledge and skills of advocacy and coalition building. In Sudan, we supported the creation of Gender Equality Networks (GENs) that are new spaces where grassroots women who suffer from marginalization and are from different political backgrounds and affiliations are taking a leading role in defining and advocating for their demands.

A significant portion of our work focused on advocacy, challenging norms, practices and structures that reinforce and maintain gender inequality, promoting economic rights of women in the informal sector, and supporting migrant women and girls. From round table discussions, high level policy forums with local and national level actors, attending global conferences and producing briefing papers, we raised awareness of the critical issues affecting women and girls and advocated for favourable laws that improve safety and well-being of women and girls in the region.

SIHA Overview

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) is a network of civil society organizations from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Uganda. It was established in 1995 by a coalition of women's rights activists with the aim of strengthening learning within civil society organizations that address and challenge women's subordination and violence against women and girls in the GHoA.



Our Aim

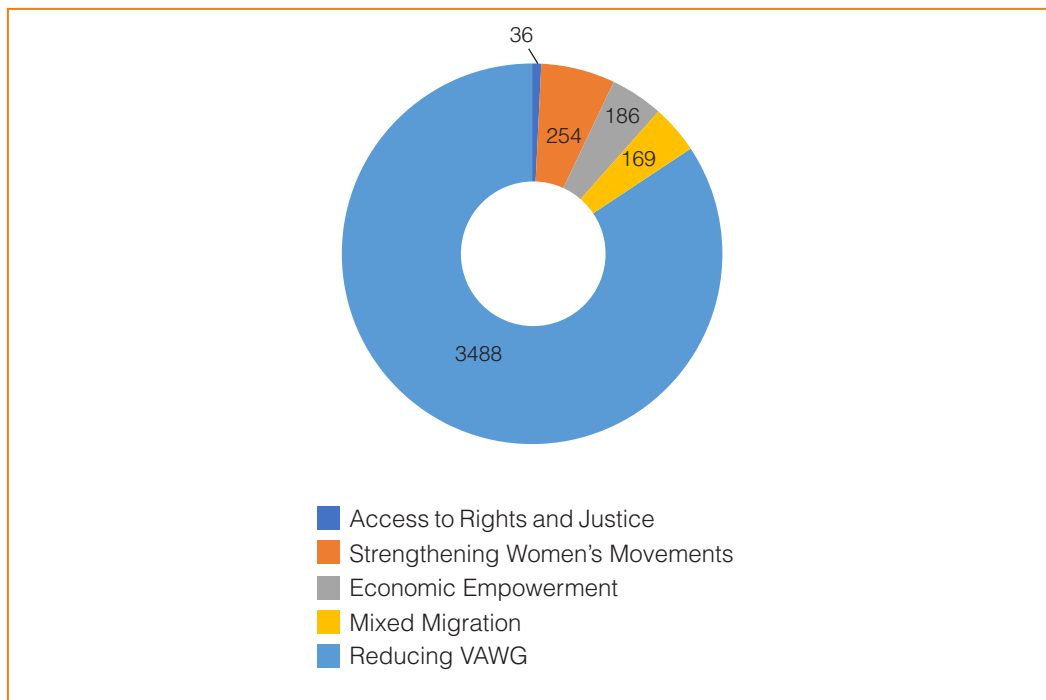
SIHA aims to contribute to unlocking the massive potential of the women's rights movement in the GHoA. This will be accomplished by strengthening the education of civil society organizations so that they can build strong collective movements that advocate for systemic change. In this way, SIHA works through and in support of broad coalitions of grassroots members to campaign and advocate for women's rights and gender equality.



Vision

SIHA envisions women and girls in the GHoA living in a peaceful, just environment where they can exercise their equal rights as human beings.

Number of Direct Beneficiaries Reached





Programme Interventions

Women and Girls Access to Rights and Justice

SIHA believes that there cannot be any meaningful transformation and empowerment of women and girls without their access to rights and justice. Therefore, our work focused on addressing barriers to access to justice, identifying gaps in the justice system, gaps in legal and policy frameworks and rallying governments to do more to promote equal access to justice for both men and women. The following is the key highlight under this thematic area;

Key Highlight

- 36 WROs mapped and profiled to address violence against women and girls.

To strengthen grassroots WROs, we assessed and profiled 5 such organizations in Somalia, 7 in Somaliland, 5 in Ethiopia, 5 in Djibouti, 5 in Sudan and 9 in South Sudan. The exercise helped SIHA to identify existing gaps among WROs, promote learning and exchange of ideas, establish women’s rights defender coalitions and assess their capacity in human rights, knowledge and skills of advocacy and coalition building. Overall, the findings revealed that the organizations lack strong networks that can influence law making processes to prioritize the needs and security of women, they have insufficient funds to conduct joint advocacy and need capacity building of staff and tools development, they need training

on designing effective organizational structures, feminist advocacy and activism as well as resource mobilization.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

At the height of Covid-19 in 2020, emerging reports suggested that violence against women and girls had intensified. Lock down measures imposed by governments across the GHoA affected effective response to violence against women and girls. Nevertheless, SIHA’s work during the partial lifting of lock downs supported marginalized women especially those in refugee camps, slums, market vendors and the urban poor to speak up about harmful and violent traditional norms as well as laws and policies that did not protect them. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- Promoted the Hag ta Mara (A woman’s right) campaign about every woman’s right to a violence-free life in Wau.
- Supported male mentors to promote VAWG prevention in South Sudan.
- Supported Community Action Groups to raise community awareness on GBV in Wau
- Established referral pathways for SGBV cases in Sudan and South Sudan including a one stop centre for service provision.

Through our partnership with the United Nations Trust Fund, we supported initiatives in South Sudan that promoted positive shifts in attitudes, behaviors and practices toward ending SGBV in the contexts of IDP camps, secondary school, and the wider community in Wau Town. This work resulted in increased condemnation of such violence amongst South Sudanese communities in the project site. This was achieved through several community engagements, including radio programs and community events that continued to promote the *Hag ta Mara (A woman's right)* campaign and sent a clear message about every woman's right to a violence-free life. The campaigns were conducted with women groups, male mentors, teachers, student clubs, and community leaders. Overall, our interventions reached 75 female political activists/human rights defenders, 1,753 female refugees/ asylum seekers and 1600 parents, students, teachers, and administrators who pledged to use the knowledge they obtained to rally the communities against violence directed at women and girls.

Relatedly, our work funded by IOM in South Sudan improved access to GBV response services and strengthened a protective environment including contributing to change of harmful and inequitable social and gender norms and behaviors that promote GBV. The use of a survivor-centered approach through community action groups significantly helped to increase community awareness and knowledge, as well as build the cognizance of the community towards prevention of gender-based violence in the targeted communities in Wau, Western Bahr-EI-Ghazel State. We also worked closely with community action groups, police, health workers and legal officers at Wau teaching hospital one stop center to ensure that there is a protective environment at grassroots level that contributed to changing the harmful and inequitable social and gender norms and behaviour that promotes GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Furthermore, we significantly supported the one stop center in Wau Teaching Hospital, which increased utilization of SGBV services because of the availability of services. To promote sustainability and effectiveness of our


interventions, we created strong collaboration and networking with the existing local authorities and other leaders in the state. This enabled the local leaders to conduct effective community meetings against GBV working hand in hand with social workers and SIHA staff.

Women's Social Protection and Economic Justice

SIHA supported the protection of marginalized and vulnerable women against economic shocks caused by Covid-19 that disrupted their incomes and led to wide social and economic disparities. We voiced the challenges that affected women in the informal sector, provided grants to small women grassroots organizations as well as capacity building all meant for the recovery and rebuilding of women and girls. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- Provided small grants of USD 3000 to 5 cooperatives in Arua district Uganda which were used to support post covid-19 recovery.
- Leadership development for a woman street vendor who was elected into local council leadership.
- 3 community dialogues supported in Arua and Bwaise on risks and challenges faced by women vendors.
- 26 first responders in Arua capacitated on the referral pathway for SGBV survivors.
- Policy influencing for the enactment of the sexual offenses bill in Somaliland.
- Community film screening in Hargeisa highlighting the plight of women vendors.
- Produced a user-friendly paralegal handbook for women vendors.



As part of the small grants to the women cooperatives in Kampala, Arua and Kotido in Uganda, we highlighted the plight of women during the 2020 covid-period which attracted attention and drew support from elected leaders through radio shows, meetings with leaders, community dialogue events. In Uganda, one of the successes included the election of one of the project beneficiaries who used to be one of the street vendors supported by the project into the local council. Florence Achiro also known as *“mama muyembe”* meaning “mother of mangoes” a former street vendor who contested in the local council elections and emerged as the winner of a LC III Woman councillor seat for Naguru 2 B parish.

We provided small grants of USD 3000 to 5 cooperatives in Arua district Uganda which was used to support post covid-19 recovery. The majority started revolving funds which have since grown to propel the women towards economic recovery.

We supported 3 community dialogues in Awindiri, Yitia in Arua district and Bwaise in Kampala to raise awareness on unplanned pregnancies, limited mobility, and the increase in VAWG as well as the pattern of many women becoming the sole breadwinners of their households during COVID. From the dialogues, local leaders committed to supporting the women market and street vendors. The Community Development Officers committed to supporting the women to report violence and ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to book and prosecuted. Women’s rights organizations like FIDA and Uganda Law Society shared their toll-free numbers that can be reached for support or legal assistance. The community dialogues also led to an increase in interest from the public in the concept of cooperatives. Having witnessed the benefits of being in a cooperative, more women in the community showed interest in joining the cooperatives, Zawedde Hasina; Chairperson Wandegeya Women Cooperative Society Limited said,

“With the activity that was recently conducted, there are more women who have approached our office and I have now registered over 8 new members and they have even paid their membership fees”

In Arua, we strengthened the referral pathway for SGBV survivors through capacity building of 26 first responders, including legal aid service providers, police, health workers, social workers, psychosocial support service providers, market leaders, local chairpersons among others. These first responders are often on the front line of receiving survivors, and thus required capacity building on ethical guidelines and sensitivity on how to responsibly and effectively support the survivors to receive all the services and support they require.

In Somaliland, we participated in a high-level strategic policy forum with local government and other national level actors to forge stronger partnerships and promote women’s human rights. We brought to the attention of members of parliament the possibilities of adapting a centralized, progressive legislation to protect Somaliland Street vendors and the great contribution of women street vendors to the economic development of the country and the importance of protecting them from violations and other major challenges they face. The MPs welcomed the idea of enactment of the sexual offenses bill to improve women street vendor’s safety and well-being while at work. Upon presentation of this bill, this would be the first presentation of the street vendor’s act in the Somaliland Parliament.

In Kampala, we took part in a policy action forum that disseminated the findings from a gender analysis of the National Microfinance Policy and Regulatory Framework in Uganda (2005-2015). This convening brought together representatives from the financial sector in Uganda, such as the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, as well as leaders from microfinance

institutions, not limited to city authorities, women's rights organizations, women's rights activists, and other stakeholders such as Kampala Capital City Authority and beneficiaries of microfinance institutions (such as cooperatives comprised of women street vendors).

Through the gender analysis, the cooperatives identified several gaps in the Microfinance Policy and Regulatory Framework which does not cater for the needs of low-income, urban women street vendors, in part because this profession does not come with a fixed location of work. The policy action meeting disseminated the findings of the gender analysis to increase awareness among microfinance beneficiaries on the policy and regulatory framework, to make policymakers consider reviewing certain policies and to empower microfinance beneficiaries to demand for inclusive products and services offered by microfinance institutions.

To increase community awareness about women street vendors in the Hargeisa market, we organized a community film screening event in January 2020, in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The film highlighted the challenges women vendors are faced with in the street. The screening was

attended by more than 60 women, girls, students, social workers, and other community members including traditional leaders, women from CSOs, and independent youth activists.

In Uganda, we supported women vendors to build knowledge of their rights and the laws governing their work by producing a user-friendly paralegal handbook to guide them. For a large segment of the urban poor in Kampala, Uganda, vending in general has long served as a key livelihood strategy in the absence of formal employment opportunities and a public social safety net. However, there are repressive street vending regulatory law enforcement tactics characterized by frequent evictions and confiscation of goods. The handbook is a useful tool for practitioners and street vendors to build resilience while demanding for justice and fair treatment.

Rights of Women and Girls on the Move

Cognizant of the myriad of risks and challenges that affect women and girls on the move, SIHA worked with them to ensure that they receive legal support, literacy and employability skills. SIHA deepened its focus on strengthening the agency of women and girl migrants by supporting them to organize and protect themselves and raised



Girls in discussion during the 2021 Regional Girls' Camp
Photography: SIHA Staff

awareness about migrants' rights to move and to work free from exploitation. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- 169 Eritrean refugees in Sudan provided with literacy and employability skills.
- Migrant women in Sudan supported to obtain identification documents from the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

Employing literacy as a tool for integration, we provided 169 Eritrean refugees with literacy and employability skills. We collaborated with Eritrean community schools in Sudan to provide literacy (reading and writing in Arabic and English) and basic skills development classes for women and girls in Al Geraif and Al Daim. 70 Eritrean migrants were also trained in vocational skills including car mechanics, car electricity, general electricity, carpentry and engineering drawing. The classes supported the refugee women to function safely and acquire skills that would assist them in improving their livelihoods in Sudan. Through our interventions, there were improvements in the literacy and employability skills of the migrant women, increased access to protection, and better economic and livelihood opportunities through vocational training. Furthermore, we supported migrant women to obtain identification documents from the Ministry of Interior Affairs to protect them from police harassment.

Building Inclusive Women's Movements

SIHA supported inclusive women's movements across the region through coalition building, developed shared positions, co-created modalities for collective action, strengthened activists' capacities, forged cross-movement

alliances, and facilitated shared spaces for activists to exchange experiences and increased regional learning. SIHA worked to increase the space for women's activism by deepening grassroots women's groups' understanding of their rights alongside broadening the agenda of more mainstream women's movements. SIHA also prioritized support for women organizing at the grassroots as well as women organizing in marginalized groups such as poor urban women, women affected by wars, domestic workers, young women and girls, and many more. The following are key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- Supported the creation of Gender Equality Networks in Sudan as spaces for marginalized grassroots women.
- Promoted women's leadership skills in Sudan.

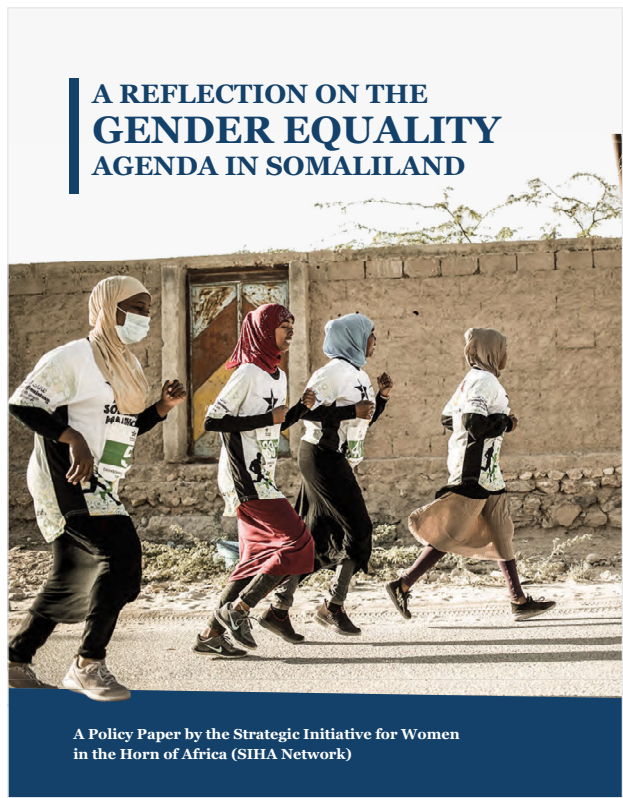
The creation of Gender Equality Networks (GENs) acted as new spaces in which marginalized, grassroots women from different political backgrounds and affiliations are taking a leading role in defining and advocating for their demands. These spaces allowed women to understand how the different treaties and resolutions, especially CEDAW and UNSCR 1325, are relevant to the issues of women in different parts of Sudan.

We promoted women's leadership skills and increased their knowledge on the intersections of gender equality and Islam, a topic which is very critical for women to challenge patriarchal structures that hinder them from their political, civil, economic and social rights. This enabled women to advocate for their rights and issues at the community and national levels. Most importantly, the GENs seek to contribute to a paradigm shift in the women's movement in Sudan where the top-down approach to addressing women's issues

is replaced with a more inclusive and diverse approach that reflects the interests of women in the local communities.

Publications / Knowledge Generation

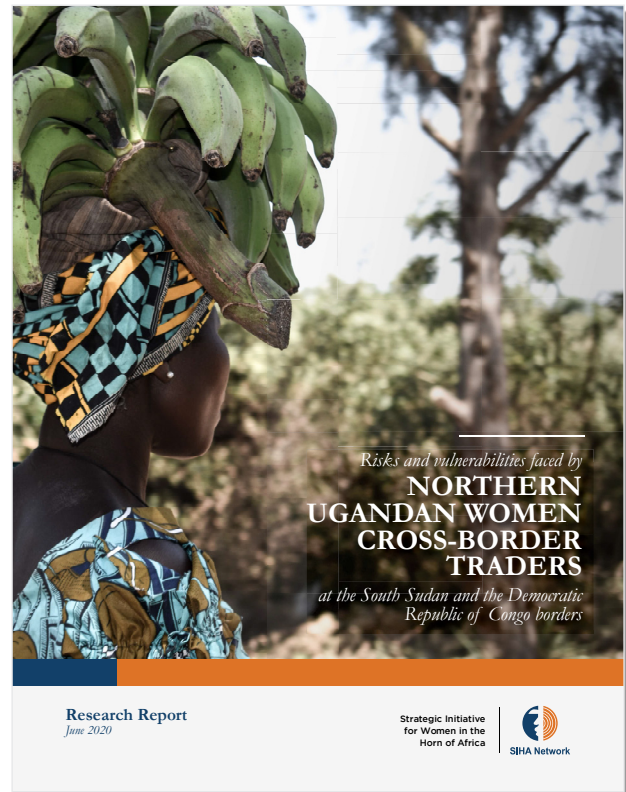
In Somaliland, we launched a position paper entitled *A Reflection on the gender equality agenda in Somaliland* which provided an analysis



of the women's movement and the situation around gender relations in the country. The paper was a culmination of efforts by SIHA and women activists in Somaliland that provided an up-to-date analysis of the dynamics of the women movement in Somaliland and gender relations. The paper acknowledged the political and social environment that surrounded the women's movement in Somaliland. It acknowledged the strong foundation for a vibrant women movement with many women entrepreneurs and small self-help groups and women street vendors who are agents of change and being part of the wider women human rights movement. It highlighted the biggest challenges faced by women in political participation especially those posed by the hardline religious leaders and general

discrimination against women. SIHA is optimistic that the paper will contribute to the discussions around building a conducive environment for women to actively participate in all aspects of society.

To understand and to better support women cross border traders, we conducted a qualitative study entitled *Risks and vulnerabilities that women cross-border traders face at the South Sudan & DRC borders*. The study highlighted the

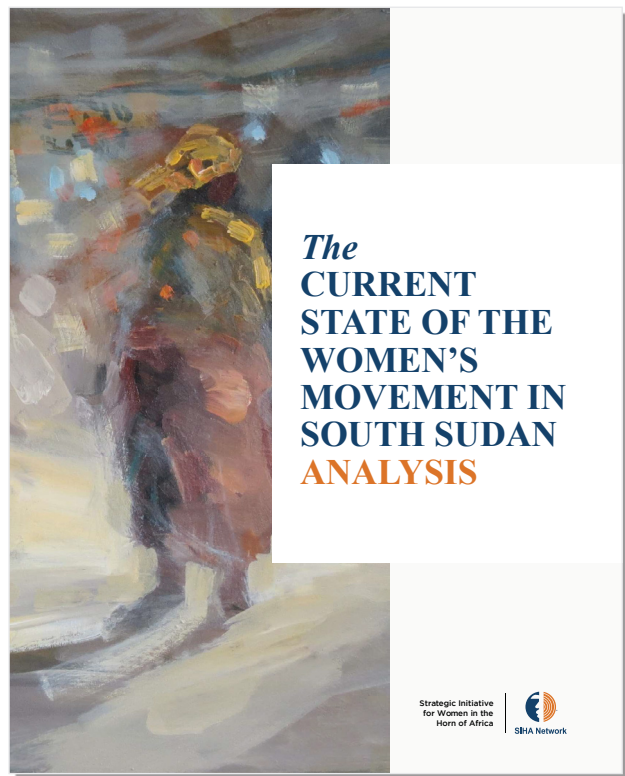


realities faced by women cross-border traders in the West Nile region in Northern Uganda while crossing into South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Accounts of rampant sexual and gender-based violence were documented and should be formulated into advocacy around protection policies for women traders who regularly cross borders because this is central to political peace processes, and as a tool to create space for women in the political arena. The lack of economic and physical security and safety undermines the livelihoods of these women traders and compounds their lack of access to finance, information and business knowledge.

Similarly, we produced a documentary that complemented the qualitative study conducted on the lived realities faced by women cross-border traders in West Nile region in Northern Uganda while crossing into South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



In South Sudan, we conducted a study entitled *The Current State of the Women's Movement in South Sudan*, to obtain a holistic understanding of

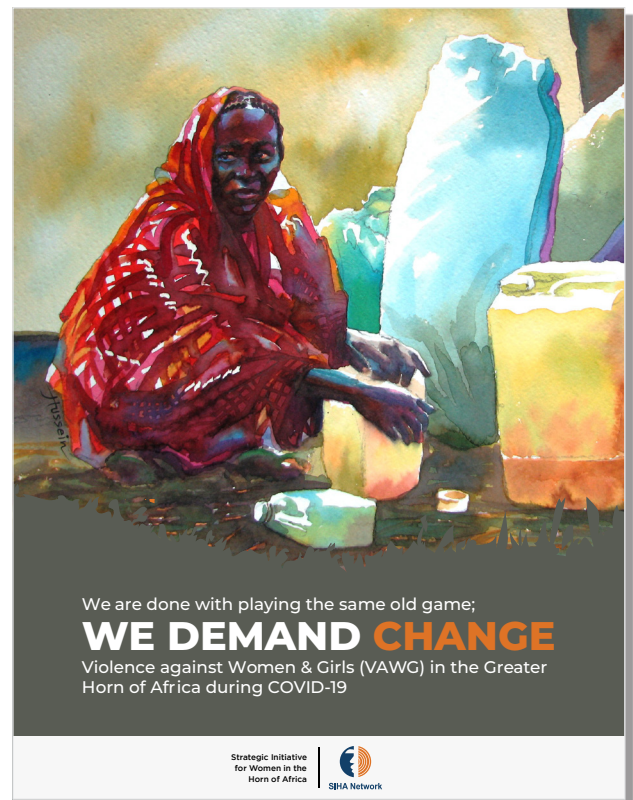


the women's movement taking into consideration the historical, social, cultural and political context of the country. Whereas the study documented the achievements and strength of the women's

movement as a collective, it also identified the various challenges, gaps and potential divisions within it. The study placed particular emphasis on the work of the women's movement and relevant civil society organizations in the areas of women, peace and security and sexual and gender-based violence.

SIHA is optimistic that the study will rally women movements to identify strategies for building a stronger movement with greater participation in decision making.

We produced a briefing paper on *violence against women and girls* in the GHoA during the Covid-19 that covered Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.



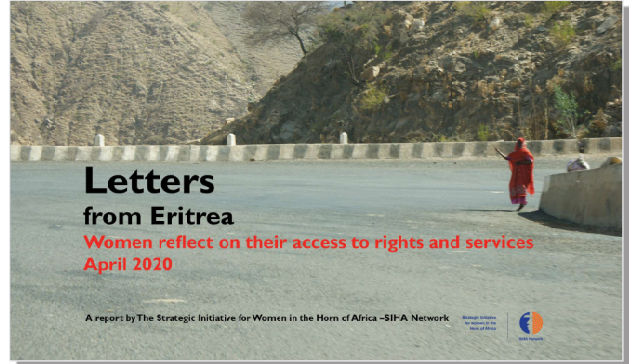
The paper showed that the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls in the GHoA stemmed from structural and systemic inequalities that existed before the pandemic. Prevention of VAWG and providing support for survivors was neither viewed as "essential" nor prioritized by governments across the GHoA region.

To make matters worse, women were caught in a double bind: increased triggers of violence at the same time as the support and protection services were being closed, limited, or losing funding. Governments across the region failed to recognize the importance of civil society and women's rights groups who provided direct support to survivors or advocate for their health, safety, and rights, in engineering COVID-19 responses.

This exclusion was particularly harmful, as these groups have the experience, contextual knowledge, and perspective necessary to ensure that COVID-19 response measures do not deepen gender inequalities.

The paper identified six key characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic response in the GHOA that exacerbated violence against women throughout the region notably quarantine/curfew orders, school closures, hand washing directives, lack of awareness, misinformation, and limited rates of testing, expansion of police power and militarization and lack of a gender-responsive approach to the crisis.

We produced *Letters from Eritrea* publication where women reflect on their access to rights and services. The publication featured testimonies adapted from a focus group discussion conducted with five women who emigrated from Eritrea within the last 2.5 years.



These testimonies were deeply personal, introspective, and honest accounts of living as a woman in Eritrea. They shed light on the Eritrean government's failure to serve and protect its people, especially women and girls. The government's failures led many people to choose to leave Eritrea forever, nearly always at significant personal risk.



Street/Market Vendors in Arua, Uganda
Photography: SIHA Staff



Cross-Cutting Issues

Advocacy and Influencing

- In commemoration of the 16 days of activism against GBV, we produced briefing papers that acted as advocacy tools highlighting the impacts of covid 19 on urban poor women in the informal sector in the GHoA. Under the hashtag #Makehervisible, we advocated for the recognition of the social and economic contributions of poor women working as informal laborers and voiced the challenges that they face.
- We participated in a global conference on Muslim family law reform together with Musawah where we discussed how the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed flaws within plural legal systems in the Horn of Africa and strategies for women's mobilization.
- We supported women street vendors to launch the women street vendors' manifesto (2021-2026) which lays out critical issues of concern to women street vendors and makes demands for addressing them.
- In Khartoum, we convened a roundtable discussion on the urgency of amending the personal status law that continues to legalize violations of women's rights in Sudan.
- In Uganda, we convened a high-level dialogue on policy and perspectives on the feminization of poverty.
- We organized a webinar on sexual and domestic violence amid covid-19 in Ethiopia to hear Ethiopian women's rights activists discuss the lived realities of women and girls as well as policy recommendations.
- On the Pan African Women's Day, we commended African women who are breaking gender stereotypes and boundaries at all levels and urged governments and communities to collaborate to end gender-based discrimination in employment.
- On the international day against trafficking in persons, we highlighted the voices of survivors in Ethiopia and the essential work of migrant survivor support organizations like the Good Samaritan Association. We urged the Ethiopian government to among others design effective mechanisms to break the chains of human traffickers by working in collaboration with civil society and the grassroots community.
- We held a dialogue on gender, peace and security in South Sudan. The conversation explored the critical need to leverage on the politicization of the women's movement in promoting peace and security in South Sudan.
- In partnership with the Somaliland Women's Research and Action Group, we distributed protective gear to women street vendors in Hargeisa. Posters on risk mitigation and protection from the spread of Covid-19 were also distributed.
- SIHA developed a policy brief on Militarization of the Public Sphere and Sexual Violence against Women in Sudan.
- SIHA advocated for the participation of women in peace processes.

Lessons Learned

- Working with grassroots organizations and WHRDs that are normally excluded from the mainstream human rights arena promotes goodwill for partnership and ownership of the project interventions.

- The use of practical tools in conducting community awareness messages especially documentaries (Videos or cinema on GBV) have a significant impact in changing the mindset of the communities at grassroots.
- The need for creativity and innovation in the implementation of some of the activities occasioned by the rise of Covid-19.
- At the community level, gender-based discrimination continued to be fueled by some cultural norms and religious fundamentalism. Access to justice continued to be hindered by a range of obstacles, including restrictions in some countries on freedom of movement and discounting of evidence given by women. Religion, tradition, and culture continued to be used as an excuse for violating women's rights, despite strong and persistent advocacy efforts.

Challenges

- Implementation of some activities coincided with the peak of the COVID 19 pandemic in most of the intervention countries. This not only caused delays for some planned activities, it also affected the implementation modalities. Consequently, most of the activities were held virtually hindered by limited knowledge and skills of WHRDs regarding use of electronic gadgets. In addition, in the greater Horn of Africa, and particularly the intervention countries have poor internet connectivity.
- The links between violence and discrimination against women and lack of economic empowerment are underlined in human and women's rights agendas. Yet, women continued to face severe legal and cultural obstacles to ownership of property and other means of wealth accumulation. This further challenged their advocacy and empowerment efforts.
- Ethiopia and Sudan faced civil unrest which delayed the implementation of some project activities.



Women protesting the October Coup, December 2021
Photography: Ula Osman

Executive Summary

Our work in 2021 revolved around our 5 thematic areas namely; ending violence against women and girls, building inclusive women's movements, women and girls access to justice, rights of women and girls on the move and women's social protection and economic justice.

Empowering communities to prevent and respond to cases of violence against women and girls was a top priority for SIHA in the GHoA. We challenged structures that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls, leading to unequal opportunities and power imbalances between men and women. We strengthened the capacities of vulnerable communities at the grassroots level to understand the basic knowledge on gender equality which significantly helped to positively change some of the behaviors in many communities toward ending gender-based violence (GBV) in their communities. Our response to GBV through the provision of psychosocial support, medical support, counselling and legal services and provision of dignity kits helped to mitigate risks to survivors and promote their healing process.

Given that women grassroots organizations face challenges in securing and sustaining funding, we provided funding to 11 women grassroots organizations and coalitions. This funding was timely because many organizations had been affected by funding gaps occasioned by Covid-19. The funding empowered the organizations to advocate for women's rights and gender equality and ensure that vulnerable women and girls have access to information, services and can report cases of violence. In Somaliland, we provided grants to Ubaxa welfare organization (USWO), Al-kownan organization,

HOW group, Somaliland development association (SAWDO), and Somaliland Environmental and Public Development (SEPDO). In Djibouti, we provided grants to HOBAN network, in Somalia we provided grants to The Somali Women Child Care Association, in Ethiopia we provided grants to the Ethiopian Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition, Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations and in South Sudan, we provided grants to a coalition of local women organizations, established in Wau and a coalition of local women organizations in Juba.

SIHA combated patriarchal tenets embodied in male-dominated and male-made laws, policies, and institutions that deny women and girls their rights and access to justice. We advanced the personal protection of women human rights defenders (WHRDs), increased their understanding of the legal avenues and broadened their analysis of risks and context, provided in-country capacity building for 114 women human rights defenders on legal frameworks and protection and safety and security. In recognition of their exceptional work around human rights, we awarded Fadwo Hassan Jimale from Somalia the WHRD award for her extraordinary work for the promotion and protection of women's rights in the GHoA. In Ethiopia, we awarded Mrs. Toyiba Yassin the WHRD award in recognition of her outstanding effort in mobilizing women's groups, supporting women and her leadership and role in the fight against GBV, and her effort in mobilizing support to women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the rights of women and girls on the move and women's social protection and economic justice, we documented the experiences of vulnerable women in the informal sector as well as migrant

women and girls. This enabled us to understand the challenges that they face and advocate for changes in their conditions. In Uganda, our work with women market vendors including the launch of their manifesto amplified the issues affecting them and resulted in calls for inclusive equitable

and affordable education, health, safety and security, end of double taxation, infrastructure as well as an end to violence against women and girls. Our vocational education training for migrant girls, girls' camps in Ethiopia and Somaliland empowered the women and girls.

SIHA Overview



The Strategic Initiative for Women in the GHoA (SIHA) is a network of civil society organizations from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Uganda. It was established in 1995 by a coalition of women's rights activists with the aim of strengthening learning within civil society organizations that address and challenge women's subordination and violence against women and girls in the GHoA.

Our Aim



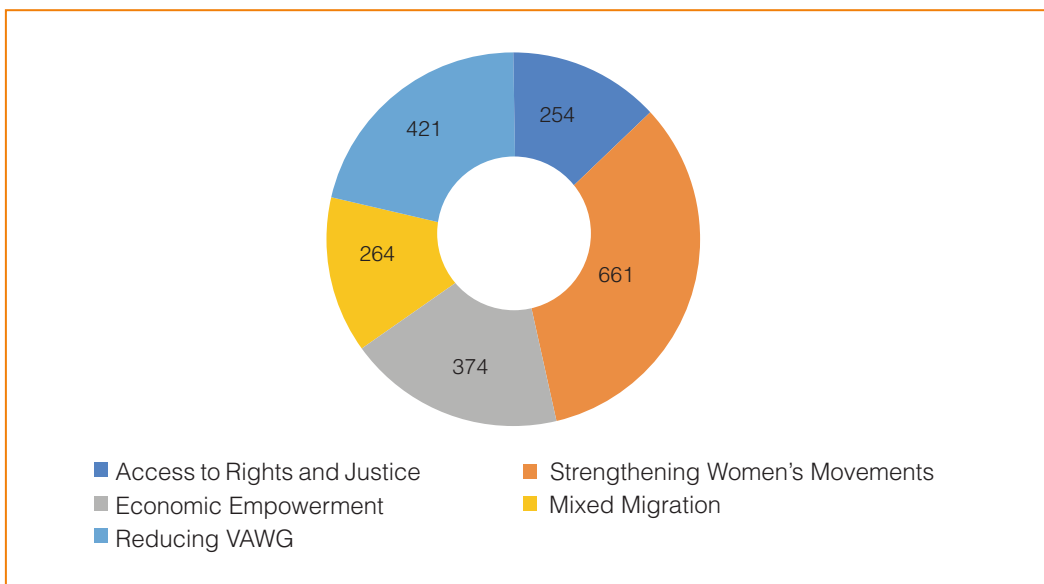
SIHA aims to contribute to unlocking the massive potential of the women's rights movement in the GHoA. This will be accomplished by strengthening the education of civil society organizations so that they can build a strong collective that advocates systemic change. In this way, SIHA works through and in support of broad coalitions of grassroots members to campaign and advocate women's rights and equality.



Vision

SIHA envisions women and girls in the GHoA living in a peaceful, just environment where they can exercise their equal rights as human beings.

Number of Direct Beneficiaries Reached





Programme Interventions

Women and Girls Access to Rights and Justice

SIHA's work sought to create an enabling environment where women and girls enjoy their rights and have access to justice. We advocated for the alignment of domestic laws with international and regional human rights standards and even more importantly, that they

question the concept of justice and justice mechanisms. To reclaim justice and women's and girls' autonomy, SIHA called for governments to uphold greater control over customary courts so that they are more in line with existing human rights standards. SIHA also called for an end to the perpetuation of discrimination by customary court chiefs. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- SIHA created network of WHRDs to address women's subordination and violence against women and girls in the GHoA.
- 144 WHRDs trained on advocacy, feminist power and the law, women, peace and security agenda, regional mechanisms and regional advocacy recommendations.
- Mobilized 32 WHRDs to discuss the situation of accountability for SGBV in the GHoA.
- Provided small grants ranging from 50-30,000 USD to 7 women grassroots organizations and 2 coalitions across the GHoA.
- Conducted evidence-based research and voiced the discriminatory and customary practices affecting women in the Gambella region.
- 2 WHRDs awarded in Somalia and Ethiopia for their extraordinary work in promotion and protection of women's rights in the GHoA.
- Supported two cases for strategic litigation in Sudan and Somalia.

We strengthened the capacity of 144 women human rights defenders (WHRDs) from across the GHoA through training on advocacy, feminist Power and the Law; women, peace and security agenda, and regional mechanisms; and regional advocacy recommendations. The training increased the WHRDs knowledge in advocacy tools and methods by deepening their understanding of the different regional and international legal and policy frameworks and

the value of these instruments enabling them to strategically formulate country level agendas on advancing gender equality. The women highlighted their key national-level issues they would like to voice at international or regional platforms. The themes are reasonably consistent across countries and prioritize women's active political participation in governance and peace processes.

To inform our regional advocacy strategy development, we conducted research to review the approach and impact of our current advocacy work to provide recommendations for future advocacy strategies and advocacy work. The research report highlighted many of the successful advocacy approaches that SIHA utilized in its work, but also provided clear information about the gaps and areas of weakness. The process provided SIHA with guidance on how to strengthen its advocacy for improved impact. In particular, the report proposed recommendations moving forward as SIHA works on the preparation of a formal advocacy strategy.


These included among others the need for SIHA to develop a regional advocacy strategy, as well as national advocacy strategies, consider activities to strengthen the capacity of legal systems in the GHoA region that are either SIHA-led, or done in partnership with other organizations, conduct robust power mappings for national, regional, and international targets and to explore opportunities for advocacy with regional and international mechanisms and foreign governments. It also provided results of a SWOT analysis and a set

of potential goals and objectives that could guide the advocacy strategy development. The exercise proved to be a very informative process that will lay a strong foundation for the next steps in the strategy development.

We convened a regional webinar for 32 women human rights defenders to discuss the situation of and accountability for Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the GHoA. During the webinar, representatives of women coalitions presented their key agenda items and recommendations. This was followed by a panel presentation of policy papers on SGBV from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland. The webinar served as a very useful platform for the women to speak to the rising incidence of SGBV in the region and to share ideas and information on how to respond. For Somalia, it was recommended that there is need to among others adopt the 2018 draft sexual offences bill and expedite government efforts to initiate a new national action plan on ending SGBV as well as strengthening SGBV service provision and service provider capacity through enhanced engagement and coordination as well as train legal aid providers on proactive



Women in Somalia March to Demand Accountability for the murder of Hamdi
Photography: SIHA Staff



legal strategies, including advocacy and public interest litigation, to challenge existing law and policy. The government was also urged to ensure the approval and the implementation of the Sexual Offences Bill and build the capacity of the police and other justice sectors in response to SGBV issues and equip civil society with available information on SGBV services.

For South Sudan, more needs to be done in terms of reaching out to traditional courts, which are still exclusively managed by men, and improving the way SGBV cases are handled, strengthening the implementation of the legislative framework that provides accountability for crimes of SGBV and Implementing grassroots level awareness raising and advocacy amongst members at the traditional courts.

To advance the personal protection of WHRDs, increase their understanding of the legal avenues and broaden their analysis of risks and context, we provided in-country capacity building for 114 women human rights defenders on legal frameworks and protection and safety and security. In Somaliland, we trained 20 WHRDs, in Somalia 25, in Sudan 27, in Ethiopia 6, in Djibouti 20 and South Sudan 16. The training also served as a platform to promote networking and cooperation and collectively and individually prepare security and safety plans. Topics in the training included digital security, international human rights law and mechanisms, psychological and physical security, and development of organisational security plans.

Cognizant of the funding constraints faced by women grassroots organizations, we provided small grants to these women's organizations which enabled them to raise awareness on VAW, FGM/C, SGBV and social media protection and child protection, organize advocacy workshops and dialogues. In Somaliland, we provided grants to Ubaxa welfare organization (USWO), Al-kownan organization, HOW group, Somaliland development association (SAWDO), and Somaliland Environmental and Public development (SEPDO). In Djibouti, we provided

grants to HOBAN network, in Somalia we provided grants to The Somali Women Child Care Association, in Ethiopia we provided grants to the Ethiopian Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition, Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations and in South Sudan, we provided grants to a coalition of local women organizations, established in Wau and a coalition of local women organisations in Juba.

In Somaliland, the grants were used to organize a meeting for 10 members from religious leaders and their role of ending FGM Practices and women issues, conduct 2 advocacy meetings on sexual offences bill and FGM policy approval process and conduct social media awareness campaigns on women's rights. In Djibouti, grants were used for advocacy workshops, awareness raising on FGM, in Somalia, grants were used for advocacy, organizing penal discussions and supporting the coordination of groups of WHRDs and the justice for Hamdi campaign. In Ethiopia, grants were used for advocacy and awareness on the rape culture and victim blaming while in South Sudan, grants were used for radio talk shows, organizing round table discussions, and drama recordings.

Through our partners, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) and Network of Ethiopian Women Association (NEWA), we conducted a study on the plural legal system and its implications for women's rights in Gambella Region. The report mapped out many of the laws and customary practices that are discriminatory and gave recommendations on how to address them. Based on the study findings, EWLA conducted media advocacy nationally where they presented their recommendations including the need for law reform, and the need for enforcement of existing laws to ensure that legal equality was translated into lived equality for the grassroots women. NEWA organized a WHRD Experience Sharing Forum in Addis Ababa that brought together 38 participants from the different conflict regions of Ethiopia. The participants included CSO members, individuals from government offices, and WHRDs of all ages and from different

regions and provided them a safe space to speak about the conflict experience of women and girls, and also revisit their strategies for peacebuilding at the grassroots level as women human rights advocates. It was also a platform to remind the participants of the need for unity of voice and sisterhood if they were to be able to amplify the voices of women and girls who are being affected by the different conflicts in the country.


In recognition of their exceptional work around human rights, we awarded Fadwo Hassan Jimale from Somalia the WHRD award for her extraordinary work for the promotion and protection of women's rights in the GHoA. In Ethiopia, we awarded Mrs. Toyiba Yassin the WHRD award in recognition of her outstanding effort in mobilizing women groups, supporting women and her leadership and role in the fight against GBV, and her effort in mobilizing support to women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. The WHRDs Award

event organized by SIHA Network was more than an award ceremony. In Ethiopia, it gave us the publicity and needed recognition to the work of women human rights defenders.

It was also an opportunity to interact with the public; to create the needed awareness on the most pressing issue of GBV against women in different sectors. Hence the engagement with the media was used as a major strategy and we were able to utilize the media space with the desired level. The mainstream and social media coverage through both prime-time news and follow up programs raised issues of women rights from diverse perspectives which was also a benefit to steer discussions from different viewpoints. We were also able to call for collaboration, and accountability from the different stakeholders in the women right's protection, for due recognition of women from different walks of life and protection for their women right's advocacy work.



Youth participate in Theatre for Change in Wau, South Sudan
Photography: SIHA Staff



In Somaliland, we convened a high-level women's coordination forum for 40 WHRDs that created a platform for coordinating women's efforts and will be used to share information on how to collectively support the women's agendas. During the engagement, participants discussed gender equality and advancement of women's rights.

Four recommendations emerged from this engagement notably the need to strengthen local community protection committee capacity to handle insecurity issues at the community level including case management, prevention, and reporting and referral procedures in order to respond to the violence against women and girls, support women and girls literacy and vocational skills development for women in IDPs and vulnerable communities, creating an enabling environment for the active participation and engagement of women in the marketplace, and formal and informal employment and lastly women inclusion and participation in decision making processes at community and national levels including on issues of policy development.

In Djibouti, we convened 2 forums with WHRDs from the FDDH from Barwago, Al Salam, Al Hanane, the association of Q5 and Bilissa. The forums aimed at the creation of a network headed by the Barwago association. A committee was set up to facilitate advocacy activities and develop an action plan including formal registration of the network, the opening of the network secretariat, conducting advocacy activities for the defence of women's rights and the skills needed and capacity gaps of WHRDs.

The forum also discussed opportunities for increased solidarity, coalition building and sisterhood among the members, strengthening confidence among the coalition, and current challenges faced by WHRDs.

SIHA in collaboration with the Sudan Human Rights Legal Center identified one case for strategic litigation. The case focused on the

dissolution of the women's union encompassing poor working women (such as street vendors) who are fighting for their rights. The Union members were receiving legal aid in preparation for the filing of the strategic litigation. Unfortunately, SIHA had to withdraw from the case because it was being targeted as being in opposition to the government.

It was therefore strategic to withdraw from the case rather than risk having SIHA operations suspended. In Somalia, SIHA provided legal aid to the family of Hamdi. Hamdi was a young Somali woman who was raped and thrown off the 6th floor of a storied building in Mogadishu. Because of SIHA's involvement her family was able to get partial justice when one of the perpetrators was convicted for rape and murder. The Hamdi case formed part of the strategic litigation results by the 15 women Lawyers whose capacity was strengthened by SIHA to contribute to the fight for justice for Hamdi and her family.

We supported a pro-democracy women's rights sit-in alongside several women's rights organizations and demanded equality before the law & equal participation in politics in Sudan.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Ending violence against women and girls was at the heart of our interventions in 2021. We condemned violence against women and girls in all its forms. SIHA focused on supporting women and girls from marginalized groups including but not limited to women and girls living in conflict situations, those who are internally displaced and in refugee camps, urban poor and migrant women living in slum areas in big cities, women and girls living in poverty and without access to education, and young women. SIHA enabled these women to speak up and raise awareness about harmful and violent traditional norms. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- Capacity building of vulnerable communities at grassroots level.
- Established 5 Community Action Groups and trained them in survivor-centered approaches to supporting survivors and conducting outreach in communities.
- 3 curriculums/training manuals and a training guide on survivor centered response and management of SGBV were produced in South Sudan directed at community action groups
- 19 SGBV survivors in Wau were supported with psychosocial support, medical support, counseling and legal services.

In South Sudan, our work with IOM strengthened the capacities of vulnerable communities at grassroots level to understand the basic knowledge on gender equality. This significantly helped to positively change the behavior of many communities, especially men and women to end gender-based violence in their communities. The various meetings conducted in the communities revealed that many communities understood the roles of the different stakeholders such as police and other law enforcement officers as some of the service providers within their localities.

Additionally, we strengthened the capacity of 5 community action groups in conducting advocacy in preventing and responding appropriately to Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) at grassroots level through radio talk shows and Jingles. We developed 3 curriculums/training manuals, a training guide on survivor centered response and management of SGBV in South Sudan directed at community action groups. Moreover, we distributed smart phones to the leaders of each community action group

to help in coordinating and mobilizing the groups for meeting, sharing critical information from the community in case of any incidents related to SGBV for effective follow up. We also provided airtime to these group leaders to support their coordination and mobilization process. The establishment of community action groups increased grassroots level of advocacy and acted as a platform where there is an open environment for discussion and sharing of issues related to SGBV that were previously considered taboo due to stigmatization or negative cultural norms.

Through the lifesaving and accessible gender-based violence services among conflict-affected communities in Wau, South Sudan project, we supported 19 SGBV survivors who received psychosocial support, medical support, counseling and legal services. The survivors were also provided dignity kits.

In South Sudan, we developed a training guide for community action groups that focuses on community action approaches as a means of strengthening systems of accountability for sexual violence and facilitating recovery for survivors. These approaches serve three crucial functions notably train community action groups, offer support to survivors and facilitate access to justice. The guide discusses how socio-cultural factors including harmful traditional justice mechanisms affect community responses to GBV. The guide also identifies referral pathways examining the role of individual institutions such as case workers and community organizers can play in aiding survivors who decide to disclose and wish to seek assistance and support and pursue justice as defined by the survivor themselves.

Women's Social Protection and Economic Justice

SIHA supported women's social protection and economic justice by promoting equitable access to and control of resources while enabling women in the informal sector to organize into cooperatives and unions. SIHA worked alongside

these “invisible laborers” and their autonomous movements to make their work and contribution to the economy visible, we challenged their

economic marginalization, advocated for their safety, and protected their rights. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- Provided a small grant to Voices of Women in Uganda to empower women and girls.
- Supported convening between women vendors association and KCCA officials to address the plight of the vendors.
- Developed a policy brief on the effects of mining on women in the Blue Nile state.
- Organized media campaigns to address the plight of women in the mining sector in Blue Nile and West Kordofan.
- Conducted advocacy to engender the labour law and criminalize sexual harassment against women.
- Launched a snippet documentary that highlighted the risks and protection mechanisms available to women and girls in Darfur.
- Supported 8 market platforms in Arua for women in cooperatives and market vendors to raise their advocacy issues.
- Supported market vendors in Arua to launch the women market vendors manifesto.
- Created a network of cooperatives for women street vendors and tea sellers in Arua and Sudan.

Through our partnership with Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa, we provided a small grant to Voices of Women in Uganda (VOWU) an organization based in Wakiso district, Uganda, founded in November 2011 that educates, equips and empowers women and girls to understand and exercise their rights and abilities so as to free themselves from poverty, violence and inequality in their homes and their communities. The Organization envisions families and communities where women's and girls' voices are heard and respected and where they can live free of violence and discrimination.

To address the plight of women vendors, we supported 2 meetings with leaders from Kawempe hawkers and vendors association and the Kampala Capital City Authority that culminated into a pledge to build a bigger market in Kalerwe that can accommodate over 700 businesses in a bid to reduce the number of women in the streets. This will bring about a big change in the lives of the women vendors as they shall have permanent

workstations and will not be moving from place to place in search of clients. In the meeting, there was a representative from Operation Wealth Creation - a Government of Uganda intervention that seeks to efficiently facilitate national socio-economic transformation, with a focus on raising household incomes and wealth creation by transforming subsistence farmers into commercial farmers. The representative shared the government's plans on wealth creation with the women and assured them that their issues and views will be incorporated into those plans.

In continuation of our efforts to improve the working conditions of women in the informal sector in Sudan, we developed a policy brief that illustrated the effects of mining on women in Blue Nile state during the covid-19 pandemic as well as agriculture and pastoralism. The policy brief provided policy recommendations that will enable the government and civil society to address the situation of women in the respective sectors.

Similarly, through the gender equality network members in Blue Nile and West Kordofan, we arranged for a national TV media appearance to discuss the situation of women after the revolution. Members raised the issues of gender inequality that women in mining and pastoralism face daily. The discussion was watched by many people including national leaders and we are hopeful this will be a step towards reforms that will benefit the women.

Furthermore, we advocated for the need to strengthen vocational training to increase job opportunities for women and girls. We held a meeting with the Minister of Labor where we discussed issues of vocational education and how to provide job opportunities for girls with a safe work environment free from sexual harassment and exploitation. Further, we also discussed amendments of the labour law to engender it by including clear articles that criminalize sexual harassment against women which is rampant. The Minister of labour pledged to take the necessary measures to amend the labour law. We are optimistic that this will translate into better working conditions for women devoid of sexual harassment, affordable and increased vocational training opportunities for women and girls to increase their competitiveness in the job market.

Our snippet documentary dedicated to the women and girls in the Darfur region highlighted our work in North Darfur, Sudan and the provision of both literacy and sexual violence protection and response programs for those internally displaced. The documentary showcased our work skills development work for Darfuri IDP women and girls (in Al-Salam and Abu-Shouk camps in North Darfur) since 2013. Prior to this, SIHA had provided similar programming for women and girls in South Darfur since 2004. Between 2014 and 2016, the program was accessed by 950 women and girls between the ages of 14 and 22. The aim of this initiative is to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of violations, particularly sexual violence – to increase their access to further education and employment.

The essence of the documentary was to spread awareness about the initiatives and bring to light the risks and protection mechanisms available to them.

In Arua, we supported 8 market platform engagements in Mvara, Driwala, Muni and Dadamu which provided a platform for women in the cooperatives and market vendors to raise their advocacy issues including insecurity, high or double taxation, poor rubbish disposal, high accident risks for market vendors and social protection unlike the formal sectors that have social protection schemes that guarantee workers decent life during and after retirement. Other issues raised included poor working conditions, poor hygiene in the market, lack of space, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse confiscation of goods upon failure to pay taxes which affect women market vendors physically, emotionally and financially. The platforms provided a space for women leaders and local policy makers to advocate for improved working conditions for women market workers in Arua and as well speak directly about women's economic and social rights thus amplifying the demands of the women's movement in Arua.

Besides, we supported the women market vendors in Arua to voice the issues affecting them through the launch of the women market vendors' manifesto. Among the issues raised included violence against women in the informal sector, Inclusive equitable and affordable education, health, safety and security, development and infrastructure, leadership and governance. Additionally, we popularized the women market vendors manifesto through a radio talk show by highlighting the issues affecting women.

Rights of Women and Girls on the Move

Over the years, SIHA has documented the physical, psychological, legal and sexual reproductive health risks that migrant girls and women face and has rallied governments and civil society actors to support migrant girls and women.

In 2021, we built the capacity of women and girl migrants through trainings, supporting them to organize and protect themselves and by raising awareness about migrants' rights to move and to

work free from exploitation. Most importantly, we documented the experiences of women and girls who are on the move. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

Key Highlights

- 39 migrant women in Nuba region supported to enrol for vocational training and 150 trained on small income generating projects.
- Organized girls' camp in Ethiopia and Somaliland, a safe space that allowed migrant girls to voice the problems they face.
- Supported 75 migrant girls with skills in non-gender typical vocations of which 70 graduated.
- Supported 210 migrant women and girls to enrol in literacy classes in Al-Gerif and Al-Daim in Sudan and 169 women and girls attended graduated from the literacy class.
- Established 2 migrant associations consisting of 75 migrant girls and provided trainings to them.

In the Nuba Mountain region, we supported 39 migrant women and girls to enrol in formal education as well as vocational training where they trained in tailoring. We also supported 150 women to join women associations through which they were trained on small income generating projects and farming. 11 young women established gardens, and they are producing onions, tomatoes, and other kinds of vegetables. It should be noted that the economic situation in Sudan poses a challenge for 90% of poor families in Nuba hills in terms of access to basic needs, education, and health facilities. Our interventions offered an opportunity for women and girls who face dire conditions. We also conducted advocacy on the need to end domestic violence and the need for girl's education in the Nuba region.

We supported 210 migrant women and girls to enroll in literacy classes in Al-Gerif and Al-Daim in Sudan and 169 women and girls attended graduated from the literacy class.

In Ethiopia, we organized a girls' camp that revealed numerous challenges that women

returnees face especially society discrimination, paying exorbitant fees to obtain national identity cards, sexual exploitation in exchange for services, nepotism/corruption and lack of financial stability. To improve their conditions, we supported them to form associations and to formally register and obtain legal recognition. We also provided them with trainings on economic empowerment, communication skills, reporting and self-assessment skills and income generation and supporting them to get working spaces. In Somaliland, findings from the girl's camp showed that returnees face unemployment, sexual exploitation, lack of skills, isolation, discrimination, stress and family pressure.

To address their plight, we supported the establishment of 2 associations (ISIR and DANJIR) consisting of 75 migrant girls. The associations have a structure and management leadership that addresses the issues affecting the girls. We also strengthened their capacity through trainings and provided psychosocial support. The girls joined Ubah sports centre where they met their groups and this enabled them to establish new connections and expand their network.

Building Inclusive Women's Movements

Our work on building inclusive women's movements is informed by our firm belief in the collective power of a unified voice among women grassroots organizations. Across the GHoA, we mapped, profiled and supported grassroots organizations, supported marginalized groups such as poor urban women, women affected by wars, domestic workers, young women and girls. The following are the key highlights under this thematic area;

- Established 5 gender equality networks (GENS) across 5 different regions in Sudan with a total of 254 members who received capacity building and networking initiatives.
- SIHA linked the GENS to participate in the 10th Rights Con Summit – a leading summit on human rights in the digital age
- Capacity building for 30 WHRDs and 3 men on Islam and gender equality and justice
- Convened 74 virtual subregional and regional meetings with WHRDs
- Advocated for the ratification of CEDAW, adherence to UNSCR 1325 and adoption of the Gender equality national policy in Sudan.
- Mapped and profiled a network of WROs, women market vendors and local leaders to address safety and security of women market vendors in west Nile.

We established 5 Gender Equality Networks (GENS) across 10 different regions in Sudan with a total of 254 members who received capacity building and networking initiatives to increase their meaningful and influential engagement in political issues. Our interventions succeeded in broadening the women's movement in Sudan to include women from different ethnicities, ages, religions, geographical locations, affiliations, professions and abilities. For instance, women's

political leaders, activists, lawyers, internally displaced women, women in resistance committees, doctors, women from the informal sector such as tea sellers, farmers and miners and women with disabilities are members of the GENS. In most cases, although there are numerous women's groups in Sudan, nevertheless, these groups are created around professions, political affiliations or geographical locations which sometimes fail to consider the interests of grassroots women. The GENS introduced a new space where grassroots women who suffer from marginalization are taking a leading role in defining and advocating for their demands.

The GENS created a unique platform for women from significantly diverse backgrounds including marginalized groups to gather, discuss and develop a national women's agenda that addresses the marginalization of women in different communities across Sudan. Moreover, women were able to understand the difference in contexts in other regions of Sudan and power relations in these regions and closely feel the struggles of women from other backgrounds. Despite the different backgrounds that these women come from, the GEN members managed to unite and create a shared vision of how the situation of women in Sudan can be improved. This allowed women to recognize the value and power of solidarity and coalition building. Additionally, the GEN members engaged in practicing democratic processes through establishing internal structures and electing members to serve as the management bodies for the GENS.

Further, we supported GEN members to participate in key regional and international forums to motivate support for Sudanese women's political participation and demands. Due to the covid-19 travel restriction, the events were attended virtually. We participated in the 10th Rights Con Summit that took place on the 7th to 11th June, 2021, which is the world's leading summit on human rights in the digital age. Additionally, in collaboration with the UN office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights in Sudan, SIHA hosted 2 Lightning Talks at the Summit the first talk was titled “From Villages to Cities: Women in Sudan Demand Gender Equality”, and the second talk was “Why is Omdurman Women’s Prison Overpopulated? To highlight the plight of women and girls.

In partnership with MUSAWAH, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, we built the capacity of 27 women and 3 men through the Islam and gender equality and justice training that empowered them and created public voices to demand alternative understanding of Islam that recognizes equality and justice in the context of changing times and circumstances. The participants learned how to apply critical reform methodologies to enable them to unpack and address other women’s issues they have been

struggling with for decades, such as women’s unpaid care and domestic work, child marriage and polygamy among others.

SIHA convened a total of 74 virtual sub regional and regional meetings with women. Following these meetings, women reported increased understanding of the issues and priorities of women from other backgrounds and therefore are better able to form coalitions with a shared agenda to women’s issues. This is evident from a survey we conducted where 82% of those surveyed reported that they have increased knowledge on gender issues and felt better educated and empowered about gender political issues. Additionally, 33% of those surveyed reported having spoken publicly about gender equality from an Islamic perspective which was something very hard for women to do in the Sudan



Girls making vision boards at the 2021 Regional Girls’ Camp
Photography: SIHA Staff

context for fear of repression and backlash both from the state, community and local leaders.

We convened 4 high level meetings with government ministries including the Ministry of Social Development, Minister of Justice, Minister of Council of Ministers Affairs, Minister of Labour and the Minister of Interior to promote the ratification of CEDAW, adherence to UNSCR 1325 and the adoption of the Gender Equality National Policy. The meetings were also attended by different state actors including political party representatives, media representatives, women activists to discuss the plight of women and to push for reforms on gender equality and better treatment for women. In most of the meetings, the Ministers pledged their support. However, the change of government in October 2021 made it very difficult to organize and continue with the discussions that had initially started like the National Women's Agenda. Similarly, no National policy was developed as planned due to the highly polarized political environment and lack of a proper government in place.

With funding from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we rolled out a 5-year project titled "We Cannot Wait": Towards an Inclusive and Diverse Women's Movement in the GHoA in Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia. The project addressed the obstacles and challenges women and girls go through in building systems for gender equality and women empowerment. The project which targets women's rights activists and organizations and aims at strengthening women's leadership and women's participation in political decision-making and strengthening women's economic empowerment and improving the economic climate for women participation.

It seeks to support women rights activists and organizations in the greater Horn of Africa to advocate for policy, law reform, and social norms, form an inclusive and diverse coalition with shared agenda and engage actively and visibly in existing or new political and social platforms to promote their agenda. Our baseline survey revealed that

women rights activists and organizations operate within the context of a general trend of shrinking civic space for civil society organizations in the GHoA region, characterized by a relatively increasing inhibitive legislative environment. The study found that the participation of the WROs especially in women led advocacy and campaigns is still low and recommended the need to address legal and policy reforms through advocacy, capacity building of WROs and WRAs, support country based and regional networks and engage in women and girl's rights awareness and empowerment.

In West Nile, we mapped 105 stakeholders including 15 from WROs, 30 PWD, 45 women market vendors, 5 from the women council, 4 CDOs and 6 women councillors whom SIHA will work closely with. Additionally, we also conducted a needs assessment that helped us to determine the gaps among the stakeholders particularly with regards to feminist transformational leadership, movement building, inter-generational/ intersectional dialogue, safety and security, networking/safe space conversation and covid-19 Prevention. Moving forward, SIHA will provide capacity building for the identified stakeholders, organize knowledge exchange forums for learning, support the creation of safe spaces for the women, link them to relevant networks, documentation of experiences for learning and development of covid-19 protocols.

Women Peace and Security

Women, peace and security remained a priority issue for SIHA in the GHoA. The following was undertaken;

We strengthened the coordination of women, peace and security networks in Somaliland, Puntland, South Central Somalia and Sudan. For each of the regions, focal points were selected and recruited. This included one focal point in Garowe and one coordinator in Khartoum. In Mogadishu, SIHA project officers supported the role of the focal points before the recruitment

of permanent focal persons. In Hargeisa, an outreach officer was recruited to support the mobilisation of the women.

To get to the core of the issues affecting women in Sudan and Somalia, we mapped and profiled women and youth engaged in women, peace and security (WPS) which enabled us to understand issues affecting them and their key priorities. In Sudan, the exercise was conducted in South Kordofan, Darfur region, Blue Nile State, Red Sea State (as a region undergoing conflict) and Khartoum. The mapping exercise documented 13 women's rights organisations and/or groups. The study recommended the need to bridge trust and building confidence in the women's movement towards their meaningful engagement in conflict transformation; continued awareness raising on laws and policies towards enhancing access

to justice; broadening the understanding of/ redefining political participation and countering the negative perception women have towards politics; groups should therefore be designed and trauma-informed practices should be embedded in the design so as to allow for psychological and emotional support; and increased participation and representation of women.

In Somalia, the mapping exercise involved 16 women from Mogadishu, 5 women from Garowe joined and 15 participants from Hargeisa, Somaliland Region. Results from the mapping exercise indicated a need for capacity building of the WPS, the need for increased outreach activities in rural areas to create awareness on women's issues and promote peace and security. Women also reported an urgent need for action to protect women from physical and sexual abuse



Activists discuss strategies for improving women's access to peace negotiations
Photography: SIHA Staff

including rape resulting from the conflict and unstable situations in these countries and forced marriages. The women also reported weak legal and justice systems that hinder support for women and low economic capabilities resulting from the deteriorating political and economic situations in these countries.

In Sudan, we strengthened the capacity of 26 women human rights defenders who included lawyers, food vendors, activists, university students through a training program. The training supported women's engagement in the peace negotiations through a carefully designed capacity building program that conceptualizes and situates the discourse of peace and conflict in Sudan through analysis of the historical and legal contexts. The training equipped the participants with critical tools to analyze the political practices,

power relations, and possible scenarios that influence the negotiation process. The program also provided an inclusive and communicative platform for women to share their peace visions, priority issues and build their agenda. As part of the training, participants further developed the women's peace and security agenda and working groups to advance the agenda. 10 of the women trained received financial support from other organisations/institutes to participate and influence using the women's peace and security agenda.

In Sudan, SIHA was part of the baseline study under the *Al Thawra Untha* project that seeks to create an open and empowering space for change, sharing and magnifying emerging voices. The baseline is part of and supports the learning and adaptive management ambitions



Literacy Class in Darfur
Photography: SIHA Staff

of the project and is an opportunity to gather evidence helping to reassess targets at the start of the project. The baseline revealed the need for women's expression, the need for spaces for dialogue, need for laws to restrict harassment of women vendors, involvement of women in peace building, gender mainstreaming at all levels, women involvement in customary decision making and judiciary and investments in professional development.

Publications / Knowledge Generation

In Sudan, we conducted a study entitled *Negotiating Space: Sudanese women's access to vocational education and employment.* The



study paper explores urban poor women's access to opportunities in vocational training and subsequent employment in Greater Khartoum, Sudan. This exploration was carried out through

an examination of the interconnected influences of the state, family, socio-religious and cultural norms, and expectations. Analyzing the social, cultural and legal makeup of Khartoum highlights how environmental factors figure into women's access to diverse employment.

The dynamics hindering women's access to vocational training and employment primarily stem from the Islamist regime's nation-building project. By looking at the multidimensional oppression directed at women from marginalized regions of Sudan, this report focuses on the interplay of gender, race, and class, and how they affect women's access to non-traditional employment in Sudan.

This report maintains that women participants represent a challenge to gender and cultural expectations about women's roles in society. The vocational sector has been resistant to women but by moving into this field, women have shattered the ceiling that restricted them. There have been recent shifts in perceptions. As women gain access to education and have greater representation in traditionally male-oriented workspaces, patriarchal beliefs pertaining to women's 'correct' place in society are being erased.

We supported women market vendors to develop a manifesto that lays out critical issues of concern for women in the markets and makes demands for addressing them. The manifesto is a collectively developed set of demands that contribute to the achievement of gender equality, equity and sustainable national development. The process of developing the manifesto allowed the women market vendors to articulate their concerns and aspirations for the 2021 general elections and beyond.

It provided political candidates with an agenda and would ensure political party accountability as they would ultimately be assessed based on where they stand in relation to issues that concern women market vendors as outlined in

the women market vendors manifesto 2021-2026. The manifesto will enhance the participation of women market vendors in political and public life.

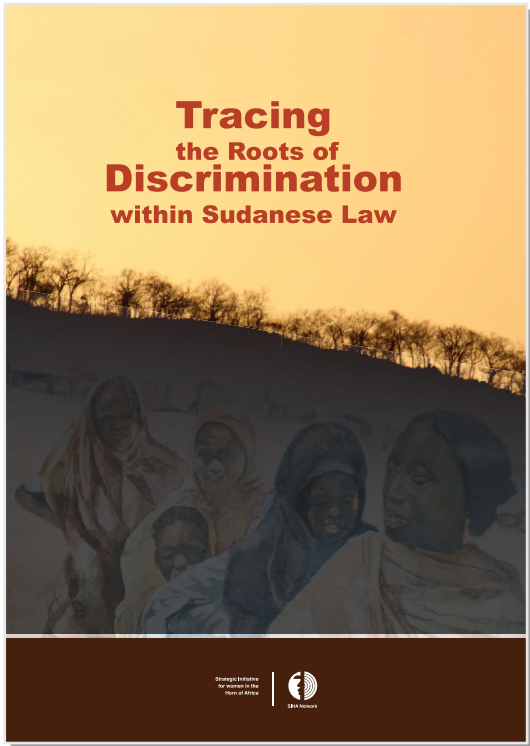


We published the 5th edition of Women in Islam journal. The journal is available in both English and Arabic. The journal seeks to promote progressive voices on gender equality and

justice and provides a space for Muslims and non-Muslims to discuss the social, political and cultural challenges associated with the intersection of Islam and gender. It aims to promote alternative, progressive readings of Islamic traditions and texts on the topics of gender equality and justice. In Somaliland, Ethiopia and Sudan, digital community debates were conducted around the issues raised in the journal especially family law and personal issues affecting women, the Islamic approach to gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's roles in Muslim community, how to address the several misconceptions and set the record straight on the complexity of gender relations and Islam, how to promote progressive voices on gender equality and justice in Muslim community, informing and influencing the public discourse and policy reform around women's rights and women's status and roles in Muslim cultures and societies, rape and early marriages, power relations of military staff who use threats of rape against women and girls as a tool for control.



In Sudan, we produced a research paper entitled *Tracing the roots of discrimination in Sudanese law* together with People's Legal Aid Centre. The



Sudanese communities and women by building their capacities to address injustices, advocate for legal reform and spread awareness among local communities who are directly affected by patterns of criminalization and violations of their citizenship rights.

The report explores the criminal justice legal framework, gendered dynamics of criminal law, political Islam and law in Sudan, discrimination against non-Muslims, discrimination against Muslim minorities, discrimination against marginalized ethnicities in Khartoum especially those from Darfur, Nuba mountains, Blue Nile, Hausa and Fulani communities.

The paper also explores ethnic and racial discrimination against women, foreign migrants and refugees, job-based discrimination and institutional discrimination. The paper recommended among others the need for the Sudanese government to establish mechanisms that will review and reform policies and laws to address the discrimination that has long been embedded within law, governance, law enforcement, media, educational system, civil society and the private sector.

paper is part of an initiative that was carried out by SIHA to empower poor and marginalized



Members of the Sudan Girls' Association participate in sport
Photography: SIHA Staff



Cross-Cutting Issues

Advocacy and Influencing

Coalition members from Somalia attended the African dialogue on ending VAWG, a regional meeting that was hosted by Equality Now. The purpose of the forum was to bring together women's rights organisations and activists from across Africa to speak about current trends and data on VAWG, share successes and threats, and brainstorm potential strategies for continued activism and response.

SIHA supported women human rights defenders in Ethiopia to register and attend the online Gender Equality Forum. The forum was dedicated to discussing the future of gender equality and women's empowerment, focusing on the gender dimensions of corruption, criminal justice responses to gender-based violence and combating transnational organized crime.

SIHA worked with the coalitions and consultants to produce shadow reports for the Universal Peer Review Process for Sudan and Somalia/Somaliland. Consultative meetings were held prior to consolidating the report. For Sudan, SIHA recommended the need to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

The review for Somalia/Somaliland took place in May 2021. Among the recommendations made include the need for the government to eradicate gender-based violence and discrimination by developing strong policies and legislation at both the state and national level; enact laws and policies that contribute to achieving gender equality and women's human rights, particularly in marginalized communities and among IDPs; and eliminate laws, policies, and practices, including

early and forced marriages that are harmful to women and girls.

In Somaliland, 1 gender alert was issued by WHRDs organisations that raised concern about the increase in rape cases. The aim of the gender alert was to remind the Somaliland government of the need to enact and implement the Sexual Offences bill.

In addition to the media reporting on the WHRDs Award ceremony, there was 1 additional mainstream media advocacy carried out in collaboration with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, where SIHA Ethiopia office and the WHRD award winner were hosted on the 'Dereb Jegna' program - a program that features women who have made key contribution in the protection and advancement of women rights in their communities. The television program was pre-recorded in August and aired in November 2021. Viewership of the televised talk show was estimated at 1,300.

SIHA influenced the sexual and offenses bill in Somalia.

SIHA influenced the Market Bill in Uganda that protected the rights of traders.

SIHA advocated for inclusive women's platforms both at the national and international levels for example women's participation at the peace tables in both Sudan and South Sudan.

SIHA advocated for health, safety, insecurity, poor leadership, lack of proper governance structures and violence against women in the markets through a women market vendors' manifesto by women street vendors in Arua.

In Somaliland, WHRDs advocacy and coordination meetings, and engagements with government, parliament and other civil society, contributed to the inclusion of FGM policy, SGBV, Rape to the implementation of the Gender Policy, and inclusion in the national action plan. Both the National FGM and Child policy were finalized awaiting enactment.

In Ethiopia, we produced 1 *gender briefing paper on the legal framework related to SGBV* giving recommendations on how women's rights groups can mobilize for change.

In Somalia, we produced 1 *briefing paper was released in March addressing SGBV* and VAW and the situation of women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The GENs in Sudan participated in a virtual workshop titled "Family Law in Africa: Regional Workshop on Reform". The workshop was organised by Musawah, FEMNET and Equality Now in partnership with SIHA Network.

Lessons Learned

- Work for advancing women's human rights requires purposeful networking and coalition building for unity of purpose, stronger voices, and better presence in spaces where women are traditionally excluded including in discourses on culture, religion, governance, and the economy.
- The use of technology and social media tools to conduct advocacy is effective in reaching wider audiences. It is important to have active social media campaigns and work closely with concerned stakeholders, with opportunities for interactive engagement on issues related to women's rights and gender equality on these social media platforms.
- The involvement of boys and men in women rights and gender equality interventions is key to moving the women rights discourse to the public and making it everybody's

concern and not just a women's rights issue.

- Formation of inclusive coalitions and women's movements are key to ensuring representation of all women's voices, in their diversity, in pushing for the changes needed for gender equality and women rights.
- Changing cultural and social norms is key to change attitudes and perceptions that uphold discrimination against women and girls.
- Engaging religious and cultural leaders is crucial in the prevention and elimination of harmful cultural practices and gender-based violence in general.
- The need for flexibility in project management and implementation approaches to ensure that activities and project times are not so adversely affected by unforeseen occurrences such as the COVID-19 pandemic, internet shutdowns in target countries, fluid political situations in the target countries.

Challenges

- In Somalia, the political and security crisis was a challenge for the country team forcing a number of planned activities to be cancelled. Difficulties to move within the city did not allow the staff to access the office location. Following the violent clashes in the city on 25th April both area coordinator and the capacity building adviser had to relocate to Nairobi for two weeks. On 10th May 2021, both staff members returned to Mogadishu and resumed implementation of activities. During this fragile period, there were only very few opportunities to continue work and there was no progress in the implementation.
- As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, some project activities were delayed especially those that required travel and physical

gatherings. In addition, some staff got infected with COVID-19 which slowed down progress and overall led to the late start of the implementation of some activities.

- In Ethiopia, the civil conflict and political unrest led to loss of lives, displacement, homelessness and created a general state of fear and uncertainty which affected overall in-country project implementation. The conflict led to an economic crisis which was made more complicated by the lack of access to humanitarian aid for over 4million Ethiopians. Additionally, since the outbreak of violence across the country over 4 million Ethiopians, majority of whom were women and children, were displaced with very limited resources to support families. There was continued deportation of migrants from the Gulf which also strained the existing humanitarian response mechanisms, communication black outs from time to time and political unrests and demonstrations impacted mobility for staff and project beneficiaries.

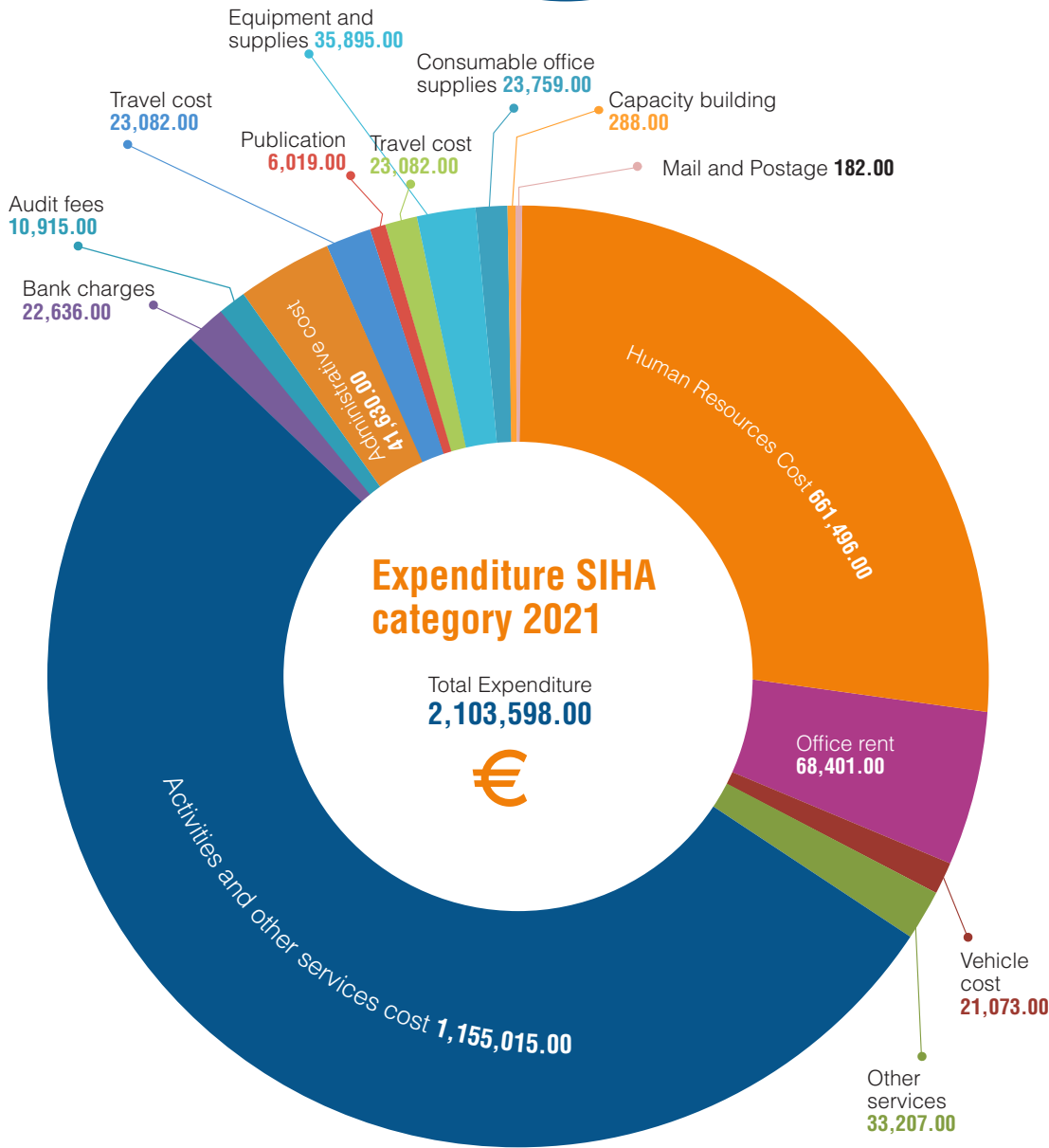
- In Sudan, the economic impact of COVID-19 as well as the policy changes implemented under the transitional government, coupled with the effects of the 2020 floods resulted in dramatic inflation, and damaged private and public facilities, goods and crops. The trading economics website showed the inflation rate in 2021 remained above 300%, starting at 330% in February and peaking at 422% in July. The socio-political environment during the period also hindered project activities, as ongoing demonstrations and protests in the country disrupted transport and communication and therefore created delays in the ability to implement activities in a timely manner. Finally, the last days of the project witnessed an attempted and then a successful military coup, which immediately suspended the ability of the office to effectively close-out some activities and created delays in the compilation of the financial and narrative report.



Women in Sudan receiving vocational training
Photography: Ahmad Mahmoud



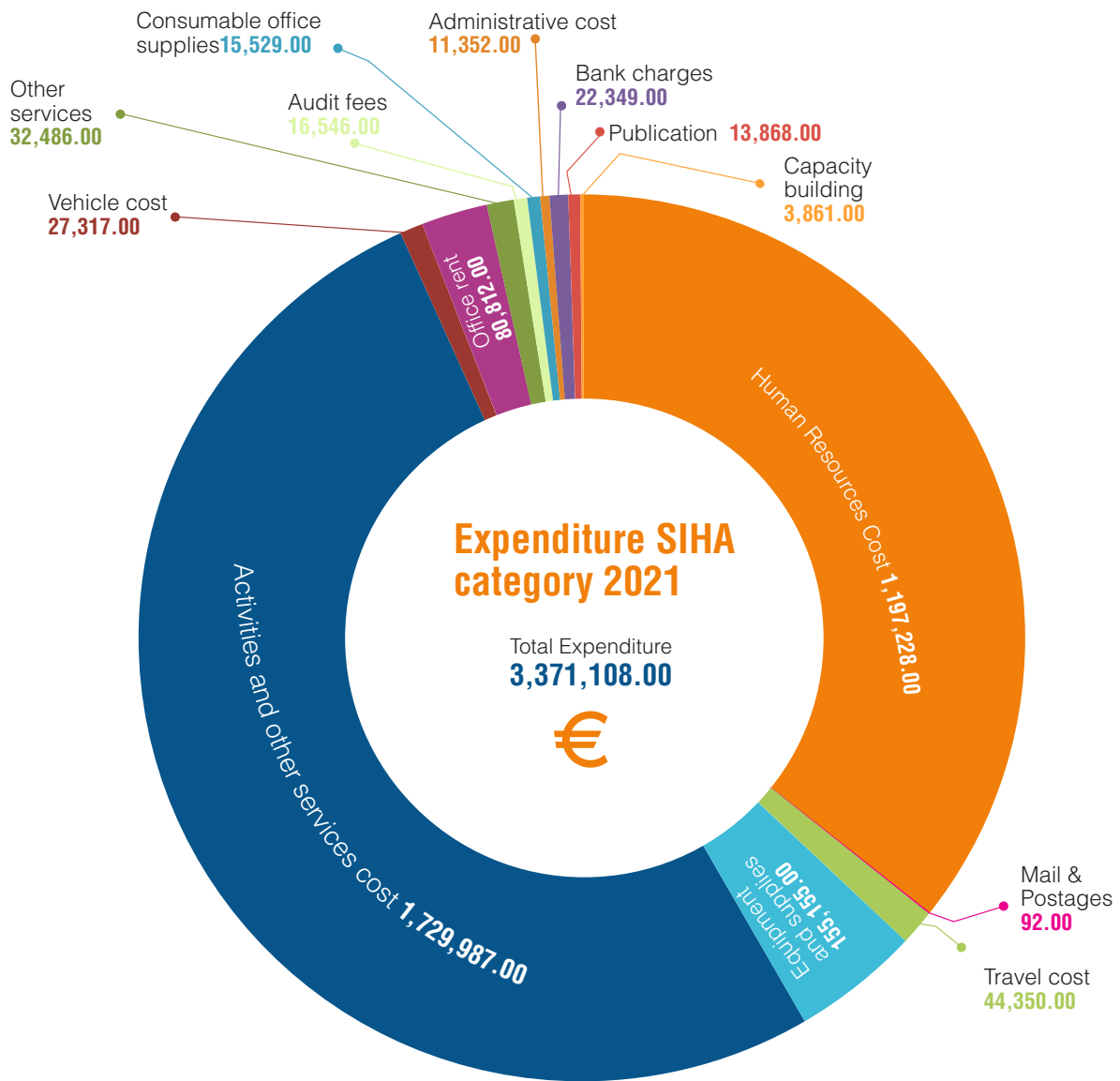
Financial Management Statement 2020



End of services benefit -

Excess of income over expenditure **247,220.00**

Financial Management Statement 2021



End of services benefit -

Excess of income over expenditure **306,826.00**



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- ▶ Dolly Anek
- ▶ Asmahani Abdelsalam Hassan
- ▶ Saba Gebremedhin
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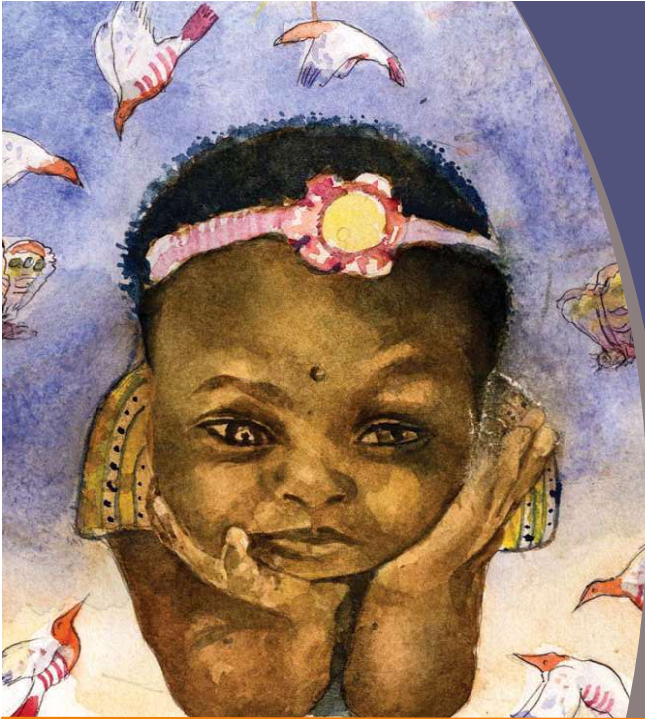
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SIHA

A story of courage and spirit of women
in the Greater Horn of Africa

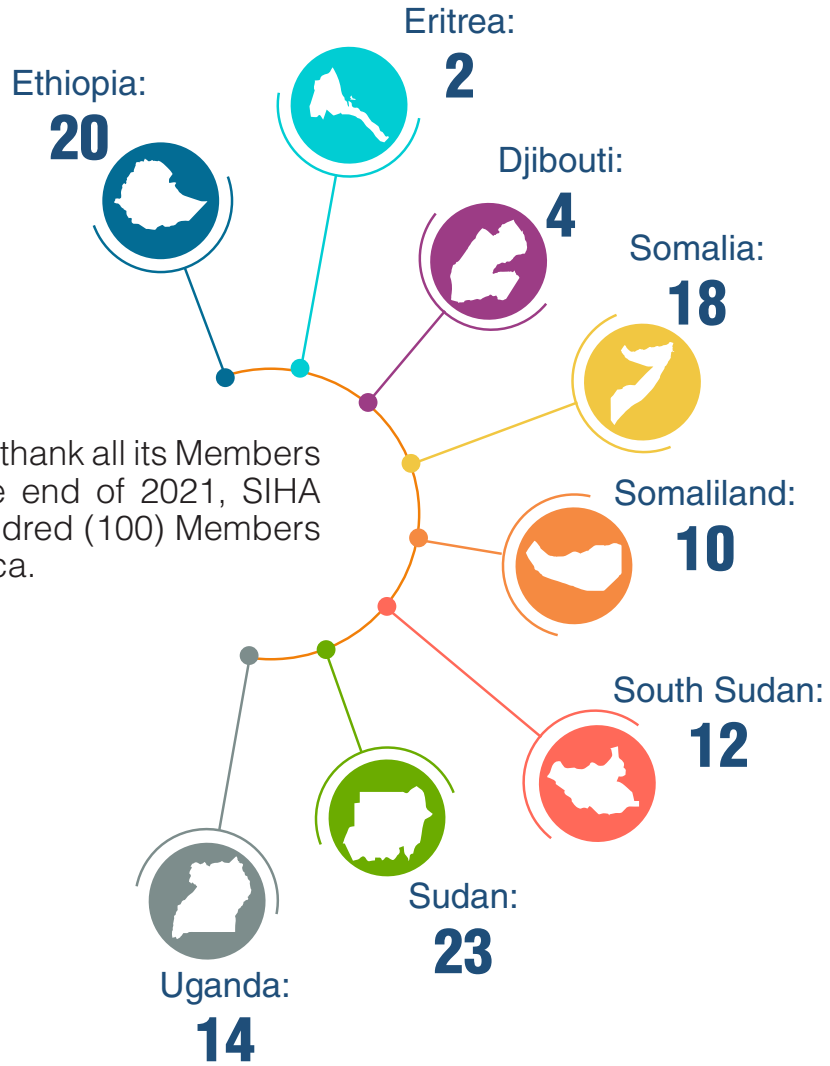
The SIHA Story Book published in 2021
Artwork: Nusreldin El Douma

Strategic Initiative
for Women in the
Horn of Africa





Our Members



SIHA network would like to thank all its Members in 2020 and 2021. By the end of 2021, SIHA Network had over one hundred (100) Members in the Greater Horn of Africa.

Total: **103**



Development Partners

SIHA would like to thank its donors and partners for their support.

- ▶ Bread for the World
- ▶ Canadian DFATD
- ▶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Embassy of Canada in Sudan
- ▶ Embassy of France in Sudan
- ▶ Embassy of Switzerland in Sudan
- ▶ Embassy of the Netherlands in Sudan
- ▶ Equality Now
- ▶ European Commission
- ▶ European Union
- ▶ Global Affairs Canada
- ▶ International Organisation for Migration
- ▶ Irish Embassy to Sudan and Somalia in Nairobi
- ▶ Open Society Foundation Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa
- ▶ Oxfam Novib
- ▶ PAX
- ▶ Sigrid Rausing Trust
- ▶ The African Women's Development Fund
- ▶ Tides Foundation/NOVO Foundation Fund
- ▶ UN Democracy Fund
- ▶ UN Population Fund (UNFPA)
- ▶ UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women
- ▶ Urgent Action Fund
- ▶ Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
- ▶ Womankind



Strategic Initiative
for Women in the
Horn of Africa



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