



# NEWSLETTER

APRIL – JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER UPDATES

## Dear Reader,

We are delighted to present to you our April – June 2024 Newsletter Updates.

This Edition captures the remarkable resilience and determination of women and girls in the communities where we operate, despite facing immense challenges.

It also highlights our advocacy efforts as we continue to push for policy reforms promoting gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms. Other highlights include our initiatives supporting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and fostering economic empowerment to help women establish sustainable livelihoods and challenge gender stereotypes.

We thank you for standing in solidarity with us and hope you enjoy reading about the impactful work we are doing.

**The SIHA Network Team**

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A team-building painting session with the We Cannot Wait Consortium members during a Regional Training aimed at promoting wellness and feminist activism.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR ENGAGEMENTS AT THE REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

## SIHA at The 79th Ordinary Session of African Commission on Human & People's Rights

We were honored to participate in the 79th ACHPR session. Our side event, “What does Justice Mean to Women in Sudan?”, focused on women’s conflict experiences, their justice views, and systemic barriers like weak legal structures and cultural norms. We proposed actionable measures to address these challenges.

We also presented a statement on the struggles of women and girls in Sudan, Ethiopia, and South Sudan due to conflicts and violence. The ACHPR adopted our recommendations in [Resolution ACHPR.Res.588\(LXXIX\) 2024 on Sudan](#)

Catch up on the conversation [here](#) and read the full statement [here](#)

**WHAT DOES JUSTICE MEAN TO WOMEN IN SUDAN?**

Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa  
SIHA Network

Thursday, 16 May 2024

2:30 PM GMT  
4:30 CAT  
5:30 EAT

Live on [f](#) [t](#) [v](#) SIHA Network pages

**SPEAKERS**

- Hon. Hatem Essiim**  
Chairperson, Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa & Commissioner, Sudan
- Prof. Zuhair Mohamed Elamin**  
Law Professor, Al-Zaim Al-Azhar University, Sudan
- Ndloseh Melvis**  
Senior Lecturer, International Relations Institute of Cameroon
- Hon. Janet Ramatoullé Saliah-Mij**  
Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, African Union
- Ina'm Attig**  
Sudanese Lawyer & Women's Rights Defender
- MODERATOR**
- Hala Al-Ikarib**  
Regional Director, SIHA Network

## 2024 FriEnt Peacebuilding Forum in Berlin

From 5th – 6th June 2024, we participated in the FriEnt Peacebuilding Forum in Berlin, during which we shared insights and strategies on feminist activism in militarized cultures to protect women’s rights activists in challenging environments.

SIHA Network also emphasized the critical need to safeguard feminist activists amidst shrinking civic space and escalating threats from anti-feminist and anti-democratic movements.

Organized by Brot für die Welt, GIZ, the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the forum underscored the importance of reevaluating power dynamics in peacebuilding efforts. Read more [here](#)



SIHA Network Regional Programme Manager Faizat Badmus-Busari (first on the right) presenting at the Forum



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## 1st Joint Forum of the Special Mechanisms of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

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Represented by Regional Programmes Manager Faizat Badmus-Busari, we participated in the inaugural Joint Forum of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Senegal. The event gathered key stakeholders to advance human rights in Africa. Our involvement included dialogues with African Union Commissioners and policymakers, advocating for vulnerable communities in the Horn of Africa, and contributing to discussions on state accountability and the Maputo Protocol.

Read more [here](#)



Our Regional Programme Manager Faizat Badmus-Busari (first from the left) in a group photo at the 1st Joint Forum of the Special Mechanisms of the ACHPRs in Dakar, Senegal.

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## Sudan Crisis: Policy Options for Europe

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Our Regional Director, Ms. Hala Al-karib participated in a policy discussion on the Sudan crisis held on April 9-10 in Stockholm, Sweden, and convened by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Represented by our Regional Director, we provided perceptiveness into the

situation on the ground in Sudan through a presentation titled "Challenges on the Ground for Humanitarian Operations."

The discussions aimed to contribute valuable inputs to European Union's wide policy-making on Sudan.

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## African Civil Society Support Initiative (ACSI) Convening in Accra, Ghana

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Group photo of participants at the ACSI Convening.

In response to shrinking civic space in Africa, Trust Africa recently launched the African Civil Society Support Initiative (ACSI) to strengthen resilience within Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). At the ACSI's inaugural convening in Accra, Ghana, on June 5-6, we engaged in discussions on building resilient organizations amid global challenges. Topics included feminist leadership, intergenerational dialogue, holistic well-being, and the state of African civil space.

Read more [here](#)



## We Cannot Wait Consortium Monitoring & Evaluation Training

We hosted our [We Cannot Wait Consortium](#) partners in Kampala, Uganda, for a Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Enhancement Session and Project Reflection Meeting. Staff from Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Malaysia, Sudan, and South Sudan participated in interactive sessions on evaluation skills and the project's Theory of Change. Highlights included a team-building painting session depicting peaceful African women and a visit to Nakawa Market. There, Market Women Vendors (MWVs) shared impactful testimonies of their advocacy for improved conditions, demonstrating the project's success. Read the full story [here](#)



Group photo of the We Cannot Wait Consortium partners during the meeting

## Empowering Female Lawyers from Sudan & Ethiopia in Gender Response Justice

We partnered with [FIDA Uganda](#) to train Ethiopian and Sudanese women lawyers in “Gender-Responsive Justice” from April 2-5 and May 6-9, 2024. The training covered policy reform, strategic litigation, and documenting conflict-related sexual violence. Participants gained skills in gender-responsive law and advocacy.



A team of 4 Ethiopian ToTs recently shared their knowledge by training 18 female lawyers from various regions in the country, continuing the dissemination of these crucial skills.



## SOMALILAND & SOMALIA

### Unlocking the Potential of Internally Displaced Women & Girls in Hargeisa

In Hargeisa, Somaliland, we launched an advocacy campaign to highlight the experiences of internally displaced women and migrant girls in IDP camps, including Mohamed, Mooge, and Daami. The campaign partnered with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers to equip girls with workforce readiness skills for future employment. Community outreach featured radio talk shows, hygiene kit distributions, and health consultations by midwives and nursing associations. This comprehensive approach provided both awareness and practical support, improving the lives of displaced women and girls.

### Advancing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Somaliland

In collaboration with the Human Rights Center (HRC), we held a three-day workshop to empower women peace activists on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). The workshop highlighted women's critical roles in peace and security, localizing UNSCR 1325 for Somaliland and providing advocacy strategies. It also focused on integrating Somaliland's Women's Manifesto into policy frameworks. One participant noted, "The training equipped us with knowledge and tools to demand our



Group photo from the workshop on UNSCR 1325, empowering Somaliland women peace activists with advocacy and policy integration skills.

rightful place in political and peace processes and advocate for our rights."

### Providing Comprehensive Support to SGBV Survivors at Statehouse IDP camp

In collaboration with the Voices of Somaliland Minority Women Organization (VOSOMWO), we assisted 20 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) survivors at the Statehouse IDP camp with medical, legal, and psychosocial services. Notably, 5 Ethiopian migrant girls were severely affected after being assaulted by boys from the host community, following a violent conflict between Ethiopian migrants and the host community. This incident underscored the acute vulnerabilities of migrant girls and the urgent need for targeted support and protection.

Additionally, we hosted a fun day at Berbera Beach for young migrant girls, featuring sports and mentorship activities. These included storytelling and interactive discussions, allowing the girls to connect over shared experiences of migration and displacement. Furthermore, trained mentors provided guidance and encouragement, helping the girls build confidence and resilience while navigating their challenges. The day combined enjoyment with mutual support and meaningful relationships development among the participants.



Migrant adolescent girls playing snakes and ladders during the TOT mentoring session in Hargeisa.



## Investing in the Next Generation of Female Journalists

Supported by SIHA Network, Women Press Clubs in Somaliland and Somalia offer platforms for female journalists advocating for women’s and girls’ rights. However, reliance on employer-provided equipment limits their independence. To overcome this, SIHA Network supplied essential small-scale equipment to 9 journalists (6 from Hargeisa and 3 from Mogadishu) such as cameras, recorders, laptops, tripod stands, and microphones. This initiative empowers journalists to highlight under-reported issues, challenge gender stereotypes, and build strong careers based on their field expertise.



Female journalists receiving essential equipment from SIHA Network Finance Officer, Muna Osman (far right)

## SOUTH SUDAN

### Breaking Gender Stereotypes in Employment in Wau



Migrant adolescent girls holding their certificates along with SIHA staff and Ministry of Education representatives at the graduation ceremony.

On June 25, 2024, the Youth Center in Wau, South Sudan, celebrated the graduation of 12 migrant adolescent girls and young women, aged 12-22, from vocational training in Catering and Hospitality. Organized by the Women Advancement Organization with SIHA Network’s support, the event featured the distribution of certificates and start-up kits to ensure the graduates’ independence and market stability. Representatives from the Ministry of General Education also attended the ceremony.

## SUDAN

### Observing One year of the war in Sudan

On April 15, 2024, we marked one year of conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. Our [video](#) reflected on the impact on SIHA Network Sudan, our response measures, and the broader effects: over 16,000 lives lost, 8 million displaced, and severe damage to health and education, with women and girls especially affected.

We also shared [blog stories](#) on social media, co-hosted an online discussion titled [“One Year of the Sudan Conflict: What Next?”](#), and documented the challenges faced by over 47,000 refugees. Check out the [infographic](#) for details.

### Promoting Collective Care Support for Vulnerable Groups in Kassala State

We held a two-day session in Kassala on collective care and support, highlighting its importance for societal solidarity and creating safe spaces during conflict. Discussions emphasized providing essential services to internally displaced women and survivors of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. The sessions covered the importance of psychological support and first-aid techniques for trauma and highlighted the need for targeted care for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses.



## Using Sports to Promote Unity and Reconciliation in Kadugli City

Despite the ongoing conflict in Sudan, SIHA organized a lively event in Kadugli and at the Ibrahim Mahmoud Shelter Center, bringing together Girls' Associations for a day of games and fun. Aimed at fostering unity and reconciliation, the event integrated girls affected by war into host communities. It engaged girls aged 12 to 21 and female teachers aged 25 to 50 from diverse backgrounds. Participants enjoyed volleyball exercises, with a final match between two teams from the girls' associations.



Group photo of Girls Association members who participated in the volleyball game.

## UGANDA

### SIHA Network Advances SGBV Ordinance Development with Arua City Council

SIHA Network is aiding Arua City Council in developing a Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Ordinance. After engaging city councilors, a law committee was formed to ensure compliance with development procedures. The committee's inaugural meeting on May 12, 2024, reviewed key documents and praised SIHA Network's thorough desk review. On June 4, 2024, SIHA facilitated the first reading of the draft SGBV Bill, marking the start of the official development process, which will include stakeholder consultations and additional readings.



Arua City Council members at the first reading of the draft SGBV Bill.

### 21 WHRDs in Arua City Equipped with Advanced Advocacy and Security Skills in Arua City

We conducted a Training of Trainers (TOT) session for 21 Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), enhancing their security and advocacy skills. The training covered threat identification, security measures, and both personal and digital safety. Emphasis was placed on self-care for mental and physical well-being. To amplify the training trained TOTs are expected their knowledge with over 200 WHRDs, amplifying the training's impact.



WHRDs in a group discussion during the TOT



## Engagement of Male Women’s Rights Activists to Combat Gender Based Violence in Arua City

Between April and May, we held 9 awareness sessions with male allies, including police, boda boda riders, media professionals, and community leaders, to combat sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Discussions focused on men’s crucial role in opposing SGBV, the impact of cultural beliefs like ‘aruba,’ and the need for increased male advocacy. Participants recognized men’s role as both perpetrators and allies, emphasizing the importance of awareness and challenging harmful cultural norms that perpetuate violence.



An awareness session with police and boda boda cyclists.





## COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY

In **Uganda**, SIHA Network hosted a safe space conversation on Menstrual Hygiene for Women with Disabilities. The event fostered discussions to dispel myths and address negative perceptions, allowing women with disabilities to voice their concerns to policymakers and representatives. Read more [here](#).

This [documentary](#) highlights these issues, including the stigmatization and inadequate Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services faced by women and girls with disabilities during menstruation.

In the **Somalia and Somaliland**, we supported women and girls in IDP camps by distributing dignity kits and organizing radio talk shows and community dialogues. These sessions

promoted open discussions on menstrual hygiene, allowing women and girls to share their experiences and gain valuable knowledge.

At the Mutamedia Center in Wau, **South Sudan**, SIHA Network hosted a menstrual hygiene awareness session to destigmatize menstruation. The event included Q&A sessions and discussions with students, girls, young women, teachers, and community members. Organizations such as the Voice to the Voiceless Girls Association and the Ministries of General Education and Gender were present. A key moment was a 14-year-old girl sharing her gratitude: “From this session I’ve learned to maintain hygiene and gained the courage to ask my father for money for pads.”



## MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS

In this quarter, our Regional Director, Ms. Hala Al-Karib, was profiled by Women's Activism NYC for her significant advocacy efforts in advancing the rights of women and girls in the Greater Horn of Africa, with a special focus on women, peace, and security in Sudan.

Hala also appeared on [Al Jazeera's Inside Story](#), where she discussed the deteriorating security situation in North Darfur State, particularly around El Fasher. The region has seen an alarming rise in killings, sexual and gender-based violence, theft, destruction of infrastructure, and looting.

Additionally, our Regional Director was featured on Africans for the Horn of Africa's Solidarity for [Solutions Podcast](#), sharing insights on enhancing women's participation in peace and security across the Horn of Africa. [Click here to listen to the full episode](#)

Lastly, Hala contributed to an interview conducted by [Voice of America \(VOA\)](#) under the SOAWR Coalition, discussing gaps in Family Law across African countries, especially Ethiopia, which perpetuate discrimination in marriage, divorce, and property rights. Find the full interview [here](#)



## LATEST PUBLICATIONS



Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa | SIHA Network

### SUDAN – A YEAR OF WAR

**Background:**



On the morning of April 15th, we found ourselves unexpectedly confronted with a situation for which we were not prepared – the outbreak of war. We had to swiftly restructure and adapt. At the onset of the war, **35 SIHA Staff** were based in Sudan, with our largest office located in Khartoum, and other staff located across the country in Blue Nile, West Darfur, South Darfur, North Darfur, and Kassala. Shortly after the 15th, Khartoum, West Darfur, and South Darfur became the first central battleground zones, and this meant that SIHA completely lost access to our offices and the majority of our Sudan-based staff lost access to their own homes.

Over the past year, SIHA has heavily utilized its resources and non-restricted resources to address the crisis in Sudan. During this time, there was a significant gap on the ground in terms of available protection for women and girls, as well as the capacity to respond to the SGBV crisis exacerbated by the conflict. Additionally, women faced other crises, including property looting, financial resource depletion, intimidation and terrorizing tactics, enslavement, abduction, exposure to aerial bombardments, and various other violations, including arbitrary detention.

## CHECK OUT OUR LATEST GENDER ALERTS, PRESS RELEASES & STATEMENTS

- ❑ [The Aftermath of Rape: Unwanted Pregnancies and Abandoned Children](#)
- ❑ [Galmudug State of Somalia Outlaws Female Genital Mutilation, Marking a Historic Milestone](#)
- ❑ [Statement by the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa \(SIHA Network\) during 79th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Banjul, The Gambia](#)
- ❑ [El Fasher in Flames: Women Strive for Survival Amid Dire Conflict and Rights Abuses](#)
- ❑ [Urgent Call to Address Escalating Violence Against Women in Somalia](#)
- ❑ [Joint statement on the Repeal of the Anti-FMG Law in the Gambia](#)
- ❑ [Joint statement for Justice of Kalkidan Bahiru](#)



## BLOG SERIES

### Redefining the Narrative: From Stigmatized Migrant Returnee to Inspirational Public Speaker

From being silenced to becoming an inspiration, Salma Abdi Adam's journey is a testament to the power of support and empowerment. Once stigmatized, Salma now stands as a beacon of hope and a powerful public speaker advocating for women's and girls' rights in Somaliland. Her transformation from a disheartened migrant returnee to a celebrated advocate underscores the impact of giving a voice to those often unheard. [Read](#) Salma's incredible story and learn how she's reshaping the narrative for countless others



### Resilience Under Pressure: Women's Experiences Amidst Somalia's Climate Change Crisis

In the midst of Somalia's climate change crisis, women and girls face unique and profound challenges. As Mogadishu floods devastate homes and livelihoods, the burden falls heavily on women, who struggle with contaminated water and disrupted lives.

SIHA Network recently spoke with women from various backgrounds—flood-displaced individuals, those with disabilities, and activists. Their stories reveal the deepening impact of climate change and the urgent need for tailored support.

[Continue reading](#)



## CONTRIBUTE TO OUR #PADSFORPEACE CAMPAIGN



**SIHA Network**

For every **\$10** donated, we provide **one Sudanese woman or girl** with a **menstrual hygiene kit** that empowers her to go through her period with dignity and pride for a full month!

**CLICK TO  
DONATE  
NOW**



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