Strengthening Inclusive Partnerships for Smallholders in Rainfed Areas

(SIPRA Project)

2024 Annual Narrative Report

(Reporting Period: January to December 2024)

Reporting Date:
(30/04/2025)

Donor: Ministry of Foreign Affairs NL

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1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Number	XM-DAC-7PPR-4000006449
Project Title	**S**trengthening **I**nclusive **P**artnerships for Smallholders in **R**ainfed **A**reas (**SIPRA**) Project
Project Start & End Dates	48 months (1 September 2022- 31 August 2026)
Project Overall Objective	By the end of the project, the project has contributed to household food and nutrition security and the livelihood of smallholder farmers in rain-fed agriculture areas of Darfur, South Kordofan, Gedaref, Blue Nile, and White Nile
Specific Objectives	• Increased and sustainable income, improved nutrition, and more resilient livelihoods for smallholder farmers & MSMEs. • An inclusive market-driven approach for economic partnerships, job creation, supply contracts, and value chain development adopted by MSMEs & agribusinesses. • A more conducive environment to benefit from economic partnerships. • Capacity development and learning mechanisms
Lead Agency	ZOA
Consortium Partners	• World Relief (WR). • SOS Sahel – Sudan (SOS). • Wageningen Social & Economic Research (WSER) formerly Wageningen Centre For Development Innovation (WCDI).
Reporting Period	January 1 to December 31, 2024

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, the SIPRA Consortium achieved significant progress in strengthening food security, building climate-resilient livelihoods, and empowering community institutions across seven Sudanese states—Gedaref, East Darfur, South Darfur, Central Darfur, Blue Nile, White Nile, and South Kordofan—despite the ongoing national conflict and operational challenges.

Through adaptive management and close collaboration with local authorities, communities, and partners, SIPRA delivered a coordinated package of interventions that reached over **34,000 smallholder farmers**, with women comprising approximately **50%** of participants. Key achievements include:

- **Strengthening Producer Associations**: Over **252 Producer Associations (PAs)** were formed or revitalized, and supported with governance, financial management, and market linkage training.
- **Expanding Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)**: More than **82 Farmer Field Schools (FFS)** were established, training **6,500+ farmers** on CSA practices, soil and water conservation, pest management, and post-harvest handling.
- **Seed Distribution and Production Gains**:
    - Distributed **over 600 metric tonnes** of improved seeds (sorghum, millet, sesame, groundnuts, vegetables, potatoes, and beans).
    - Supported cultivation of **48,000+ feddans**, leading to strong production outcomes:
        - **Sorghum**: ~51,498 MT
        - **Millet**: ~5,000 MT
        - **Sesame**: ~2,290 MT
        - **Groundnuts**: ~800 MT
        - **Vegetables and tubers**: Significant outputs, notably in Central Darfur and Gedaref.
- **Empowering Women Farmers**:
    - Over **1,450 women** participated in homestead gardening initiatives.
    - **Women-led PAs** accounted for 60–64% of membership in several states.
- **Stimulating Rural Entrepreneurship**:
    - Developed **36 business concepts** for financing under the Small Grant Challenge Fund.
    - 2 concepts approved at a value of 44,731 EUR as of the end of the 2024 reporting period
- **Promoting Sustainable Natural Resource Management**:
    - Established land and water resource management committees in Central Darfur, introducing early warning systems for climate resilience.

Despite insecurity, supply chain disruptions, inflation, and administrative delays, SIPRA's adaptive, community-driven approach enabled a tangible impact at scale. Early evidence indicates increases in crop yields of **20–30% per feddan** across intervention areas, contributing to improved food availability and strengthened institutional capacities. The SIPRA Consortium remains committed to deepening resilience-building efforts and scaling sustainable food systems in Sudan, setting a strong foundation for expanded impact in 2025 and beyond.

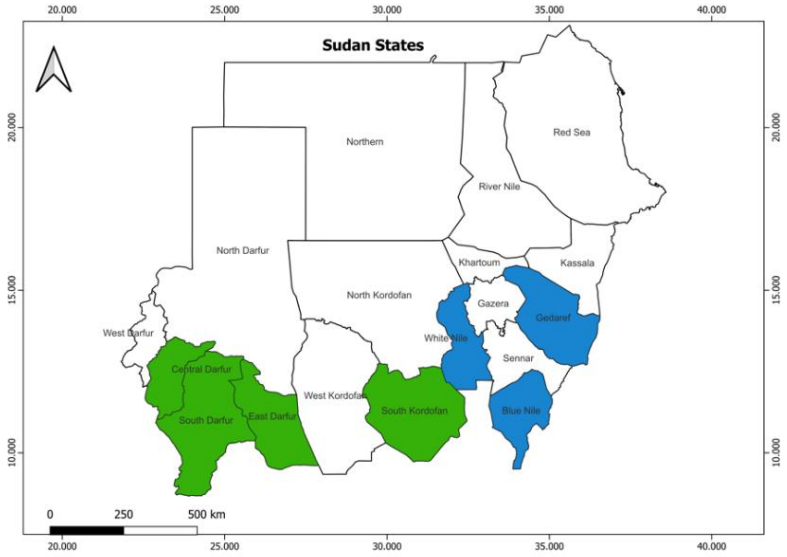
3. CHANGES IN CONTEXT

The conflict that erupted on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continues to significantly impact the implementation of the SIPRA programme. It has disrupted not only SIPRA consortium operations but also the everyday lives of the communities we serve. Amidst this instability, the SIPRA consortium has remained steadfast in its commitment to enhancing food and nutrition security and supporting smallholder farmers in Sudan's rainfed areas.

The conflict has created a highly fluid and unpredictable operational environment, with access constraints, disruptions in supply chains, and widespread displacement. These challenges are particularly pronounced in Darfur, where smallholder farmers—most of whom rely entirely on seasonal rainfed agriculture—face extreme difficulty accessing inputs, markets, and technical support. The deteriorating security situation also hampers the movement of goods and personnel, further exacerbating economic collapse and food insecurity.

Despite these constraints, the SIPRA consortium partners have adopted an adaptive management approach and remained agile in their response. With the approval of EKN, the consortium initiated emergency support for smallholder farmers during the 2024 planting season, in line with SIPRA's Outcome 1, particularly Output 1.2. This support was crucial in helping small producers maintain productivity and mitigate the risk of total crop failure amidst escalating conflict.

Amendment 1: Expansion of the SIPRA Programme
In light of the prolonged crisis and its implications for program implementation, the consortium initially explored a revision of the SIPRA Theory of Change (ToC). However, it was later agreed that a scenario planning approach would better support adaptive decision-making under uncertainty. After ten months of monitoring and learning, the consortium developed three plausible programmatic scenarios and sought approval from EKN to implement **Scenario 3: SIPRA Expanded**. This scenario proposes the geographic expansion of SIPRA activities to include Gedaref, White Nile, and Blue Nile states, alongside the original intervention areas. The expansion is aligned with Section 2.7 of the Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) grant policy framework and contributes to several objectives under EKN's Multi-Annual Country Strategy (MACS III) for Sudan (2019–2022).



Revised SIPRA Theory of Change (ToC)
Following EKN's approval of the programme expansion, the consortium undertook a comprehensive revision of the SIPRA Theory of Change to reflect the realities of working in a protracted crisis context. The revised ToC adopts an integrated market and food systems approach and aims to deliver results through two core delivery mechanisms—**Technical Assistance (TA)** and the **Challenge Fund (CF)**—across four key investment areas:

1. Sustainable Production and Income Generation
2. Household Nutrition
3. Market-Driven, Innovative Business Models and Enabling Environment
4. Capacity Strengthening and Learning Agenda Development

The overarching objective remains to enhance household food and nutrition security and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Sudan's rainfed agricultural zones. Assuming a relatively stable or improving political and security environment in active states and localities, the revised ToC is designed to deliver measurable impact and improve resilience at household and community levels.

Withdrawal of Euroconsult Mott MacDonald
Earlier this year, Euroconsult Mott MacDonald formally withdrew from the SIPRA consortium. To ensure continuity in program implementation, ZOA, as the lead partner, temporarily engaged the former Challenge Fund Manager from Euroconsult Mott MacDonald. His experience proved instrumental in supporting the consortium with the adaptation of the revised ToC and the development of the 2024 work plan.

Framework Agreement with MetaMeta
Rather than seeking a direct replacement for Euroconsult Mott MacDonald, the SIPRA Consortium Steering Committee endorsed a strategic partnership with MetaMeta, formalized through a Framework Agreement. MetaMeta now provides technical assistance for Outcome 2 of the SIPRA programme, particularly focusing on Challenge Fund implementation to strengthen market linkages and facilitate value-chain development in rainfed areas.

MetaMeta brings over 15 years of experience working in Sudan, with a strong presence in fragile, arid regions where rainfed agriculture is critical to local livelihoods. The organization is well-known for promoting scalable, practical innovations that support rural economies. With a deep contextual understanding of Sudan's socio-economic and political dynamics, MetaMeta also maintains a robust network of local partners and experts—an asset that is especially valuable under the current security-related travel restrictions.

Amendment 2: Leveraging Non-Rainfed Agricultural Systems to Enhance Programme Impact and Diversification
In response to ongoing conflict and climate-related challenges in Sudan, the SIPRA programme proposes an amendment to strategically expand its scope beyond rainfed agriculture. While the programme has achieved significant progress with food crop production among smallholder farmers, recent assessments and consultations have highlighted opportunities to enhance resilience and diversify livelihoods by incorporating complementary systems such as poultry, livestock, horticulture, and fisheries. These sectors offer promising avenues for improving food security, increasing income generation, and strengthening value chains, especially for vulnerable groups like women and youth.
In the latter part of the year under review, the SIPRA consortium submitted the proposed amendment to EKN seeking to **broaden the SIPRA Challenge Fund to support these non-rainfed agricultural systems** through targeted technical and financial assistance, capacity building, and improved market access. This approach not only aligns with SIPRA's overarching objective of enhancing household food and nutrition security but also contributes to inclusive economic development, climate resilience, and private sector engagement. By integrating these systems, the programme is well-positioned to deliver greater impact and sustainability in fragile, rainfed areas of Sudan. EKN has yet to approve the request.

SIPRA Conflict Analysis
During the 2024 reporting period, the SIPRA Consortium conducted a gender and age-sensitive conflict analysis across its seven target states—East Darfur, Central Darfur, South Darfur, White Nile, Blue Nile, Gedaref, and South Kordofan—to ensure the program is implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner that minimizes harm and supports peacebuilding and social cohesion. While the original conflict analysis began in April 2023, it was disrupted by the outbreak of war in Khartoum and the rapid spread of violence across Darfur and Kordofan. At the time, only data collection for South Kordofan had been completed. In response to the evolving context, SIPRA commissioned an external consultant to resume and expand the analysis to include the full range of dynamic conflict drivers, incorporating the effects of the ongoing war, economic instability, and climate-related pressures. The updated conflict analysis was conducted from October 10 to November 7, 2024, with findings grounded in field data from SIPRA's target localities. This comprehensive assessment provides critical insights that will guide the program's adaptive implementation in fragile contexts and support efforts to strengthen local resilience and cohesion.

In **Gedaref State**, relative stability allowed for the successful implementation of the SIPRA project's planting season support across five targeted localities. However, several challenges emerged during the distribution phase. Recent security directives in the capital city of Gedaref prohibited large public gatherings, requiring the reallocation of seed supplies originally delivered to a central warehouse. This logistical adjustment led to an extension of the distribution timeline from the planned five days to eight. Additionally, the establishment of multiple new checkpoints between villages hindered farmers' access to distribution centers. In response, the project team adopted a hybrid distribution model—delivering inputs directly to individual farmers and through designated farmer representatives in Galaa Nahal and Rahad localities.

A further complication arose due to an RSF-led attack in Dindir locality, which borders Mafaza. This incident caused widespread displacement from seven villages in the western part of Mafaza locality, forcing many farmers to flee to unknown locations in search of safety. Consequently, the planned distribution of 25 sacks of sorghum to 100 farmers in the affected areas had to be temporarily postponed. Approximately a week later, the project received confirmation that the displaced farmers had returned to their villages. In response, the SIPRA team promptly dispatched a field team to complete the distribution, which was successfully carried out on Thursday, 18 July 2024. The affected villages included: *Wad Awaad Abushaiba, Wad Awaad Howsa, Wad Awaad Almuaskar, Wad Alatrash, Geraifat, Etaifa,* and *Harry Abaker*.

In **East Darfur**, despite the prevailing conflict, the project was implemented across the targeted 30 villages located within the localities of Ad Du'ayn, Abu Karinka, and Adila. ZOA's local partner, Al Massar, covered ten villages in Abu Karinka. ZOA was among the first INGOs to establish and maintain consistent communication with the local security committees under the national administration. These committees conducted regular security assessments and maintained close coordination with stakeholders to ensure staff were well-informed. At the community level, ZOA continued to engage the locals by working closely with community leaders. These leaders were entrusted with key responsibilities, such as maintaining communication with target groups, conducting direct meetings during visits to town, etc. This approach, supported by strong coordination with local authorities, enabled uninterrupted humanitarian access through ongoing community mobilization and the identification of key individuals to support and enhance implementation efforts.

In **South Darfur**, programme implementation took place across 22 villages within the localities of Mershing, Beliel, and Asunta, in partnership with ZOA's local partner, NaHA. While progress was made, several challenges affected the timeline and efficiency of implementation. Delays in the procurement process for improved local seeds led to corresponding delays in their distribution to farmers as originally planned. However, the team re-strategized and worked closely with vendors to ensure the seeds were distributed within the acceptable time for planting. Seasonal rainfall and flooding in valleys, particularly in the Asunta locality, further restricted access to target villages. Additionally, the dramatic fluctuation of crop and input prices during procurement significantly impacted availability and budgeting. Rising fuel costs and limited availability also delayed the transportation of agricultural inputs to the field. The broader context of instability and conflict in South Darfur exacerbated these operational challenges. Frequent changes within government bodies disrupted travel and coordination,

while safety concerns and delayed authorization from authorities hindered access to several areas. Inflation further complicated implementation, forcing NaHA to complete bulk purchases early to avoid further price hikes. Cash liquidity constraints following the outbreak of war also presented difficulties; however, NaHA adapted by leveraging mobile banking platforms. The unpredictability of the security landscape and concerns about achieving the intended results within the set timeframe remain significant, but adaptive strategies and local partnerships continue to help mitigate risks and maintain progress.

In **Central Darfur and Blue Nile**, the project target areas have come under the control of three different entities following the outbreak of conflict on April 15, 2023. Despite this complex administrative landscape, the project team was able to ensure smooth implementation and maintain strong collaborative relationships. This was achieved by proactively engaging the relevant authorities or representatives in each location at various stages of implementation, sharing timely and relevant information, and conducting thorough pre-planning and coordination.

In **South Kordofan**, the security situation showed relative improvement compared to the previous season, as no major clashes were reported among the main conflicting parties—SPLM, RSF, and SAF—since early March. The only exception was a minor confrontation between SAF and SPLM in Kega village, one of the SIPRA target communities in Al Reif Al Shargi, which concluded without significant casualties. Overall, the situation remained calm during this time. However, critical supply routes into Kadugli and Dilling towns were severely affected. The main road from Al Obeid remained blocked by RSF forces at Algoaz locality on one end, and by SPLM forces between Dilling and Kadugli on the other. This dual blockade led to a serious shortage of commodities, particularly food, pushing prices well beyond the reach of most households in SKS. Compounding this, the recent fighting in West Kordofan State and the RSF's takeover of Al Fula (the state capital) and Al Meram town, near the South Sudan border, further disrupted the flow of goods into SKS via the Al Fula–Lagawa road. In addition, frequent network outages and the collapse of the banking system posed significant operational challenges for SIPRA implementation in some cases, causing substantial delays in planned activities such as cash transfers, outreach to program beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and communication among program staff across states and localities, prompting the need to reschedule workplans to later dates – **this cast across all the 7 SIPRA states and consortium partners**.

In **White Nile,** there was relative stability, as RSF forces had not advanced into the area. However, the RSF's June 2024 offensive and takeover of Sinnar State had significant spillover effects. The attack resulted in the blockade of central Sudan's key roadways linking the eastern and western regions, cutting off access to White Nile State, including Rabak locality, a SIPRA intervention area, for nearly four months (until October 2024). This disrupted the supply of essential goods and commodities, severely affecting people's livelihoods and well-being across the state, with a similar impact as indicated under SKS.

4. PROJECT RESULTS

In East Darfur State, in 2024, the SIPRA programme made substantial progress in East Darfur, delivering impactful activities across the localities of Ad Du'ayn, Abu Karinka, and Adila. The programme, implemented by ZOA and its local partner Al Massar, reached 30 villages, with 10 villages each in Ad Du'ayn and Abu Karinka, and Adila. A key achievement was the formation and training of 100 Producer Associations (PAs). These newly formed PAs, comprising 2,073 members, received intensive training on organizational development, including governance, bookkeeping, budget management, and marketing. Ongoing coaching further strengthened the leadership capacities of 300 committee members, enabling them to manage their associations effectively.

In support of the 2024 planting season, 7,500 households were provided with improved groundnut and sorghum seeds (22.5 kg and 6 kg per household, respectively). Despite supply chain challenges, the distribution was well-timed, enabling farmers to plant before the onset of rains. Farmer Field School (FFS) and demonstration plot approach continued to be a cornerstone of SIPRA's adaptive agricultural support. In total, 650 smallholders (482 female, 168 male) participated across the three localities—250 in East Darfur, 150 in Adila, and 150 in Abu Karinka. These sessions covered Climate Smart Agriculture, water use efficiency, improved seed utilization, and nutrient-dense, climate-resilient crop diversification. The resulting harvest was positive: groundnut yields reached 8–12 sacks (a sack is 45kg), while sorghum yields ranged from 3–5 sacks (a sack is 90kg), indicating improved crop yield in the target communities compared to previous years.

Targeted support for women was another major focus in 2024. A total of 450 vulnerable women across the three localities were supported through the Jubraka (Homestead Farming) system, receiving seeds (okra, cucumber, eggplant, maize), plastic sheets, buckets, and spray pumps. Women received training on land preparation, pest control, and crop management, leading to consistent harvests and better household nutrition. Okra yields ranged between 230–250kg per woman, and cucumber was harvested in cycles of 50kg every few days. These interventions not only improved dietary diversity but also generated income through the sale of surplus produce. Additionally, 300 female-headed households from 20 villages in East Darfur and Adila were selected for support through small-scale business grants. The identification of income-generating activities (IGAs) is complete, and the next phase will involve the disbursement of small grants to initiate these businesses.

Institutional capacity building remained a priority. Sixty (60) field-level extension workers (21 women and 39 men) were trained to enhance local agricultural support services. Coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture ensured that training materials and logistical support were provided to strengthen outreach to smallholder farmers, especially women.

Conflict resolution mechanisms were also supported; 40 local leaders were trained on conflict de-escalation and land-use management. Community-based committees were formed in each locality to address farmer-nomad conflicts, water disputes, and land management issues, drawing on local norms and traditional dispute resolution practices. In parallel, 40 landless individuals, particularly women and youth, were identified and verified for land access support.

To promote community engagement and market linkages, the Challenge Fund mechanism was introduced to PAs in Abu Karinka, with concept note templates shared and orientation sessions held. Thirty-three concept notes have already been submitted in Adila, and evaluation processes are underway. These small business ideas are expected to catalyze value chain relationships and promote private sector partnerships. The SIPRA programme's integrated approach in East Darfur—linking agricultural support, women's economic empowerment, institutional strengthening, and conflict resolution—has laid a strong foundation for inclusive, market-oriented, and resilient rural livelihoods across the region.

Table 1: Key Achievements: **East Darfur State**

Intervention Area	Description	Value
Geographic Coverage	Localities covered	3 (Ad Du'ayn, Abu Karinka, Adila)
	Villages reached	30 (10 in each locality)
Producer Associations (PAs)	Producer Associations formed and trained	**100 (2,073 members)**
Agricultural Inputs (Planting Season Support)	**# Households received improved seeds**	**7,500**
	Groundnut seed per household	22.5 kg
	Sorghum seed per household	6 kg
	Total Seeds Distributed	**213.7 MT**
	Groundnut yield range	8–12 sacks (45 kg per sack)
	Sorghum yield range	3–5 sacks (90 kg per sack)
Direct Support to Women	Vulnerable women supported	**450**
	Okra yield per woman	230–250 kg
	Cucumber harvest frequency	~50 kg per cycle (every few days)
Conflict Resolution	Local leaders trained on conflict de-escalation	40
	Community-based conflict resolution committees formed.	3 (1 in each locality)

In South Darfur State, the SIPRA programme recorded major strides in supporting smallholder farmers across three localities in South Darfur—Mershing, Belil, and Asunta. Against the backdrop of a deepening hunger crisis spurred by the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), SIPRA's timely interventions have proven critical.

A total of 3,500 farming households across 22 villages in Mershing, Belil, and Alsunta localities received vital agricultural support under the SIPRA programme. Each household was provided with improved millet seeds (26,250 kg of the Wad Ashana variety), sorghum seeds (35,000 kg of the Wad Ahmed variety), and a donkey plough to support land preparation. This distribution aimed to strengthen food security and boost crop production in the 2024 planting season.

The seed distribution process was participatory and inclusive, coordinated closely with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), local authorities, and community leaders to ensure transparency and equity. Each farmer cultivated 3 feddans of millet and 3 feddans of sorghum, resulting in a total yield of approximately 52,500 sacks of millet and 157,500 sacks of sorghum—significantly higher than in previous seasons due to favorable rainfall and timely input delivery.

Support to vulnerable women was scaled through the establishment of homestead gardens (Jubraka). In collaboration with MoA and village committees, 500 women across the three localities received vegetable seeds (okra, tomato, radish, water grass, watermelon) and essential tools (jerry cans, small hoes). The intervention ensured improved household nutrition and contributed to household income generation through the sale of surplus produce. Additionally, 15 women farmer groups—comprising 150 members (125 female, 25 male)—were formed and supported with seeds, fertilizer, land rental, and ploughing services to cultivate 75 feddans (30 feddans groundnut, 45 feddans sorghum). These groups received technical support and monitoring to enhance their productivity and organizational capacity.

To build climate resilience and knowledge, 14 Farmer Field Schools (FFS) were established across the three localities, benefiting 350 farmers (217 women, 133 men). These FFSs served as hands-on learning platforms, introducing techniques in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), efficient water use, natural resource management, and crop diversification. The demonstration farms were equipped with inputs and tools, and the training covered land preparation, seed spacing, pest and disease control, crop rotation, rainwater harvesting, and post-harvest techniques. In parallel, nine demonstration plots were set up in eight locations, bringing together 350 participants who practiced learned skills under real field conditions. This practical exposure significantly increased the farmers' confidence and ability to adopt improved agronomic practices.

SIPRA also prioritized institutional strengthening and market engagement. In 2024, 20 Producer Associations (PAs) were established across Mershing and Belil, involving 600 farmers (333 women, 267 men). These groups were trained on organizational governance, business management, marketing, and record keeping, in collaboration with MoA. Members elected their leadership and developed initial concept notes to guide future engagement with the Challenge Fund and private sector actors. The participatory approach to PA formation fostered strong community ownership and laid the foundation for improved value chain integration. Overall, SIPRA's 2024 programming in South Darfur demonstrated the impact of integrated, context-sensitive agricultural interventions, enhancing household food security, resilience, and community cohesion during a period of extreme vulnerability.

Table 2: Key Achievements: **South Darfur State**

Intervention Area	Description	Value
Geographic Coverage	Localities Covered	3 (Mershing, Belil, Asunta)
	Villages Reached	22
Producer Associations (PAs)	PAs Formed	20 PAs involving 600 farmers (333 women, 267 men)
Agricultural Inputs (Planting Season Support)	# Household received improved seeds (and donkey ploughs)	3,500
	Millet Seed Distributed	26,250 Kg (Wad Ashana)
	Sorghum Seed distributed	35,000Kg (Wad Ahmed)
	Donkey ploughs distributed	3500
	Millet Area Cultivated	3 feddans per HH × 3,500 HH = 10,500 feddan
	Sorghum Area Cultivated	3 feddans per HH × 3,500 HH = 10,500 feddans
	Total Feddans Cultivated	21,000 (3,500 farmers × 6 feddans)
	Estimated Millet Yield	52,500 sacks
	Estimated Sorghum Yield	157,500 sacks
Direct Support to Women	Jubraka Support	500
	Seeds Distributed	Okra (25 kg) Tomato (10kg) Radish (50 Kg) Water grass (50 kg) Watermelon (50 kg)
	Women Farmer Group	15 Groups (150 members)
	Total Farmer land cultivated	75 Feddan (45 Feddan for Sorghum 30 Feddan for Groundnut)

In Gedaref state, ZOA made significant strides in establishing and operationalizing the SIPRA project, despite the broader national challenges posed by the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Key start-up activities were successfully implemented, including recruiting core project staff, finalizing the Technical Agreement (TA) with state authorities, and launching inception meetings at both state and local levels. These sessions fostered strong stakeholder buy-in, bringing together representatives from the Ministry of Production and Economic Resources (MoPER), Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), security forces, and various technical departments. ZOA also finalized a sub-recipient agreement with its local implementing partner, SAHARI, who took the lead on community mobilization, coordination, and field-level delivery across targeted localities.

As part of SIPRA's adaptive management strategy, major attention was given to planting season support. A total of 86.75 MT of improved, certified, and treated seeds—including 76.75 MT of sorghum and 10.5 MT of millet—were distributed to 7,500 smallholder farming households across Rahad,

Basunda, Mafaza, G. Nahal, and Wasat Gedaref localities. Additionally, 18,750 liters of herbicides were distributed to boost planting success. Distribution was managed through a 31-member committee involving the Ministry of Agriculture, local partners, and community representatives, ensuring transparency and fairness. Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) indicated 96.13% satisfaction among recipients, though farmers also expressed the need for earlier seed delivery and highlighted occasional concerns regarding seed quality.

Production results have been highly encouraging. The 7,500 smallholder farmers who received seeds produced an impressive 13,374 MT of food, broken down into 2,394 MT of millet and 10,980 MT of sorghum—a strong validation of SIPRA's support in boosting agricultural output amid challenging conditions. Many farmers reported yield increases of 20–30% per feddan, attributing these improvements to the quality seeds, farmer training, and timely extension services provided through the project.

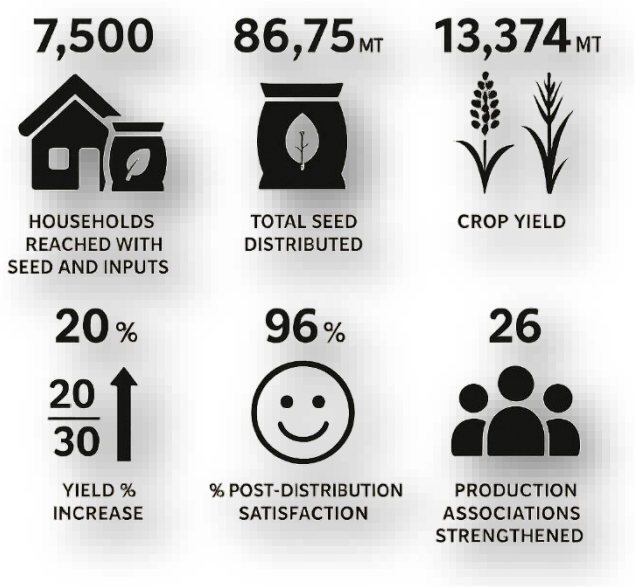
In parallel, SIPRA established 30 Farmer Field School (FFS) demonstration plots covering 600 feddans, with six plots set up per locality. Crops cultivated included sorghum (in all five localities), sesame (in four localities), and groundnuts (in Basunda). Farmers managing these demo plots received an integrated package of support, including improved seeds, herbicides, farming tools, land preparation assistance, and comprehensive training on Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices such as water harvesting and soil moisture retention.

Additional seed support was extended to specialized groups. 15 demo plots received 2.18 MT of improved seeds (900 kg sorghum, 480 kg sesame, and 800 kg groundnuts), resulting in the production of 289.035 MT of crops—134.325 MT of sorghum, 41.04 MT of sesame, and 113.67 MT of groundnuts. Moreover, 15 women farmer groups were supported with 3.9 MT of seeds (1,500 kg of sorghum, 400 kg of sesame, and 2,000 kg of groundnuts), alongside 255 sacks of fertilizer and 375 liters of herbicide. Notably, a women's group in Gozely successfully cultivated 287 sacks of groundnuts (90 kg each) from 50 feddans, highlighting the project's emphasis on women's economic empowerment.

The SIPRA project also supported homestead gardening (Jubraka) initiatives to strengthen food security and enhance household nutrition. 1,403.5 kg of improved vegetable seeds were distributed to homestead women's groups, while training sessions equipped extension workers and rural women with skills in intercropping, vegetable cultivation, pest control, and agro-processing for value addition. To further bolster productivity, SIPRA provided agricultural equipment, including back sprayers, land preparation tools, pest management supplies, flip charts, markers, and other stationery to both demo plot farmers and women farmer groups, ensuring farmers were well-resourced for the planting season.

Capacity-building efforts extended beyond production. 26 mature Producer Associations (PAs) with over 5,000 members (64% women) were mapped and strengthened. These PAs developed and submitted 120 concept notes for small business grants under the SIPRA Challenge Fund. Out of these, 15 small business grants were awarded under Track 2 in 2024, with implementation rolling into 2025. In summary, despite the complex operational context, the SIPRA project in Gedaref State demonstrated strong progress and tangible impacts in 2024, building resilience, improving food security, and empowering local farmers, especially women, to thrive amidst adversity.

Figure 1: Infographics of Key Achievements: **Gedaref State**



In Central Darfur State, in 2024, the operational environment improved compared to the previous year, allowing SIPRA implementation activities, particularly in Nertiti locality, to fully resume. A total of 15 new Producer Associations (PAs) were successfully established and supported, bringing the number of active PAs in Nertiti, Golo, and Rokero to 27, with a combined membership of 1,700 smallholder farmers (40% women, 7% youth). These groups received targeted support in organizational development, governance, and business skills, leading to the formation of democratically elected leadership structures. The legal registration process for these associations progressed well, with four of the five official requirements fulfilled.

The Farmer Field School (FFS) model continued to anchor SIPRA's implementation strategy. In 2024, 10 demonstration farms were established across the three localities, reaching 1,430 farmers (over 40% women). These sites promoted Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices such as improved soil management, integrated pest control, water harvesting, and post-harvest handling. To further strengthen technical expertise, a five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) was organized for 12 MoA extension officers, focusing on CSA methods and farmer engagement strategies.

The season's results clearly reflected the impact of these interventions. During the main rainy season, SIPRA distributed 22.2 metric tons of potato seed to 175 smallholder farmers, who subsequently produced 97.95 metric tons of potatoes, with a notable improvement in product quality thanks to CSA and FFS training. In addition, 7.81 metric tons of Egyptian beans were distributed to 225 farmers, resulting in a production yield of 72.4 metric tons. Furthermore, 7 kilograms of tomato seed were distributed to 160 farmers, leading to a total harvest of 41.6 metric tons of tomatoes.

SIPRA also provided critical support for winter planting activities. A total of 500 kilograms of onion seed were distributed to 290 farmers, while 985 kilograms of radish seed and 985 kilograms of watercress seed were also supplied to the same group of farmers. Although harvesting for these winter crops had not yet commenced at the time of reporting, the groundwork has been firmly laid for a productive season early in 2025.

Community-based natural resource management and conflict resolution efforts advanced significantly during the year. In Nertiti, SIPRA supported the formation of three local committees, each comprising 10 members (six men and four women). These committees initiated planning sessions, developed schedules for land and water resource mapping, and designed conflict mediation frameworks to ease

tensions between nomadic and farming communities. The committees also benefited from a five-day training provided by the University of Zalingei's Peace and Development Center, focusing on sustainable land use, pasture and farmland management, and early warning system development. These efforts are crucial steps toward fostering peaceful and inclusive agricultural development.

To complement the production improvements, SIPRA conducted a comprehensive value addition training for 600 farmers (384 men and 216 women), focusing on potatoes, broad beans, and tomatoes. Participants were equipped with skills spanning the entire value chain—from input selection and planting to post-harvest processing, cleaning, packaging, and storage. In addition, consultative sessions were held with the MoA, HAC, private sector actors, INGOs, and community stakeholders to identify priority value addition opportunities specific to Central Darfur's agricultural context. These initiatives will be built upon in 2025 through enhanced technical support in agro-processing and marketing, helping to strengthen private-sector linkages and deepen local ownership of the value chain development process.

Table 3: Key Achievements: **Central Darfur State**

Intervention Area	Description	Value
Geographic Coverage	Localities covered	3 (Nertiti, Golo, Rokero)
Producer Associations (PAs)	New PAs established	15
	Total active PAs	27
	Total PA members	1,700 (40% women, 7% youth)
Agricultural Inputs (Planting season support)	Potato seed distributed	22.2 MT
	Farmers receiving potato seed	175
	Potato production	97.95 MT
	Egyptian bean seed distributed	7.81 metric tons
	Farmers receiving Egyptian bean seed	225
	Egyptian bean production	72.4 MT
	Tomato seeds distributed	7 kg
	Farmers receiving tomato seed	160
	Tomato production	41.6 MT
	Onion seeds distributed (winter season)	500 kg
	Radish seeds distributed (winter season)	985 kg
	Watercress seed distributed(winter season)	985 kg
	Farmers supported for winter planting	290
Conflict Resolution	Committees formed in Nertiti	3

In Blue Nile State, despite a volatile and restrictive environment, SIPRA successfully transitioned from inception to active implementation in Blue Nile State in 2024. A total of 53 Producer Associations (PAs), representing 1,700 farmers (40% women), were mapped, assessed, and supported through detailed organizational strengthening exercises. Working closely with local MoA offices, World Relief provided PA members with training on financial management, governance, recordkeeping, and business planning. Registration processes advanced steadily, with four of the five required steps completed; finalization of association bylaws is expected in early 2025.

Capacity building remained a core focus of the program. Although the establishment of demonstration plots and full Farmer Field School activities was delayed due to access constraints, farmers still received training on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices, post-harvest handling techniques, and both pre- and post-planting guidance. Agricultural extension agents remained actively engaged, providing localized coaching and preparing the farmer groups for a stronger rollout of activities in 2025. In December, World Relief also participated in a Food Systems Resilience Assessment (FOSRA) training with WSER, laying the groundwork for future adaptive, data-driven programming.

The agricultural production season in the Blue Nile showed remarkable progress. During the main season, 99.24 metric tons of sorghum seed were distributed to 2,080 smallholder farmers, resulting in a significant yield of 19,537.3 MT of sorghum. Similarly, 18 MT of sesame seeds were distributed to 980 farmers, who collectively produced 2,250 MT of sesame. For winter planting, 415 kilograms of a variety of vegetable seeds—including okra, eggplant, tomato, pumpkin, juicemello, radish, arugula, and cucumber—were distributed to farmers. Harvesting of these winter crops was ongoing at the time of reporting.

Market engagement activities under Output 3.3 encountered challenges, as efforts such as market information pilots and group selling strategies were deferred due to insecurity and the absence of functional government coordination in key market corridors. Recognizing these limitations, SIPRA has reprioritized and reprogrammed these activities for 2025, focusing on restoring B2B platforms and facilitating public-private dialogues when conditions improve. Despite these challenges, some important progress was made under the Challenge Fund's Track 2, with six business concepts—four small and two large—developed and reviewed for financing. These concepts aim to develop scalable, value-chain-linked business models aligned with Blue Nile's agricultural context.

Through strategic flexibility, close collaboration with local stakeholders, and phased implementation, SIPRA laid a strong foundation for resilient agricultural development in Blue Nile. As trust between communities and program staff grows and local capacities are strengthened, SIPRA is well-positioned to scale up its work on value chains, promote sustainable land use, and build stronger economic resilience for smallholder farmers in 2025.

Table 4: Key Achievements: **Blue Nile State**

Intervention Area	Description	Value
Producer Associations (PAs)	PAs assessed and supported	53
Agricultural Inputs (Planting season support) Conflict Resolution	Sorghum seed distributed	99.24 MT to 2,080 farmers
	Sesame seed distributed	18 MT to 980 farmers
	Sorghum production	19,537.3 MT
	Sesame production	2,250 MT

In White Nile State, in 2024, the SIPRA programme expanded its operations into Rabak locality in White Nile State (WNS) as part of its adaptive management strategy. This strategic move was implemented to compensate for the exclusion of Algoactedz locality in South Kordofan, which had become inaccessible due to persistent insecurity. Following a rapid needs assessment and consultations with stakeholders, SOS Sahel confirmed Rabak's suitability for intervention. The security situation in WNS remained relatively stable throughout the year, though supply chains experienced temporary disruption between June and October due to RSF control over the Sinnar–Rabak corridor. Despite this, diversified sourcing options enabled successful procurement and timely distribution of inputs.

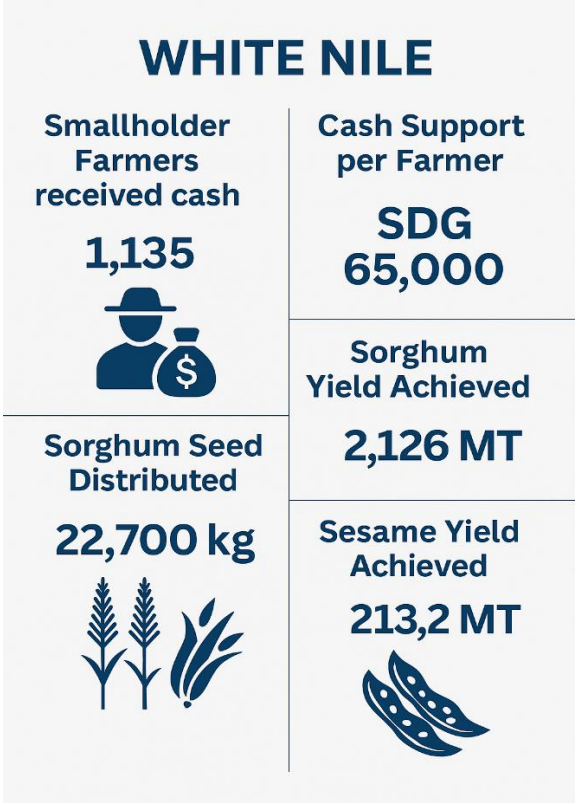
Implementation began with extensive coordination and orientation meetings involving government counterparts, including MoPERs, HAC, local extension services, and Producer Associations (PAs). A total of 1,135 smallholder farmers were supported with cash assistance of SDG 65,000 each, enabling them to meet essential household needs and focus on their farms during the critical planting period. Alongside cash support, each farmer received 20kg of sorghum and 4.5kg of sesame seeds—sufficient to cultivate 5 and 2 feddans respectively. The seeds were procured from the Arab Seed Company before the RSF blockade of the Gadarif–Kosti road. Despite climatic and logistical challenges, 1,063 farmers planted sorghum and 1,006 planted sesame, achieving yields of approximately 2,126 tons and 213.2 tons, respectively. A total of five Farmer Field Schools (FFS) were also established, reaching 100 members and promoting best agronomic practices.

To address the knowledge and capacity gaps in frontline service delivery, 23 extension cadres (15 women, 8 men) were trained in Food Systems, Agri-Business Management, Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). These trainings were delivered in collaboration with subject

matter experts and aimed at equipping extension staff with practical tools to better serve rainfed farming communities. Additionally, institutional support was provided to the rainfed agriculture department in the form of IT equipment, office furniture, and renovations. To combat post-harvest losses, 1,135 farmers were each supplied with 18 plastic storage sacks as an alternative to unavailable PIC sacks in local markets.

A strong communication and visibility component accompanied the technical and financial interventions in WNS. Two radio sessions were aired in partnership with WNS Radio, focusing on SIPRA's objectives and the role of extension services. A documentary video was also produced to highlight the achievements of the 2024 planting season support. These initiatives significantly raised awareness among stakeholders and reinforced the programme's credibility. Overall, the delivery of PSS-2024 in White Nile marked a milestone in SIPRA's adaptive strategy, demonstrating effective coordination, efficient resource mobilization, and strong community engagement. The expansion into Rabak has proven to be a timely and impactful contribution to improving food security, livelihoods, and resilience among smallholder farmers in fragile, rainfed contexts.

Figure 2: Infographics of Key Achievements: **White Nile State**



In South Kordofan State, in 2024, the SIPRA programme achieved significant milestones, particularly across Kadugli and Al Reif-Shargi localities. Notably, 26 new Producer Associations (PAs) were successfully mapped and registered, bringing the total number of active PAs in the state to 80—meeting the SIPRA target for South Kordofan. The remaining 40 PAs originally planned for Algoaz locality had to be reallocated due to ongoing insecurity, and Rabak locality in White Nile State was selected as a strategic replacement. In line with strengthening local systems, the Extension Departments in Kadugli and Al Reif-Shargi were supported with fuel and stationery, enabling them to maintain critical service delivery to smallholder farmers. SIPRA also continued its commitment to gender-inclusive programming, training 250 women farmers from five groups in vegetable production and equipping them with improved seeds and basic agricultural tools to boost household nutrition and income.

As part of SIPRA's adaptive management strategy, the Planting Season Support (PSS**)** approach—first implemented in 2023 in response to conflict-related challenges—was continued and further scaled in 2024 with endorsement from the Dutch Embassy. Although security conditions in South Kordofan slightly improved with no major conflict incidents in Kadugli and Al Reif-Shargi since early March, supply chains remained disrupted due to RSF and SPLM blockades on the main roads from El Obeid and El Nuhud. To navigate these constraints, SIPRA engaged reliable local suppliers with access to alternative routes, ensuring that procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs proceeded without delay.

Through strong coordination with government counterparts and local community structures, SIPRA effectively delivered multiple PSS interventions. These included the establishment of eight Farmer Field Schools (FFS), where 200 farmers (130 male, 70 female) were trained through hands-on demonstration plots. Additionally, 2,000 smallholder farmers received improved sorghum (20kg) and sesame (4.5kg) seeds—enough to cultivate 5 and 2 feddans, respectively. Despite access limitations, 1,500 farmers successfully planted sorghum and 1,243 planted sesame, producing an estimated 1,350 tons of sorghum and 186.45 tons of sesame. Cash support (SDG 67,500 per farmer) was also provided to all 2,000 beneficiaries via trusted local cash centers due to limitations in formal banking access. Farmers were further supported with 15 plastic storage sacks each, addressing post-harvest loss in the absence of PIC sacks in local markets.

Capacity building was central to this year's efforts. Forty lead women farmers from 20 women's groups were trained in vegetable production and equipped with assorted seeds (okra, cucumber, radish, tomato, eggplant, watercress, watermelon) and hand tools. These groups are now actively managing both communal and individual home gardens. Additionally, 20 extension cadres (12 women, 8 men) received advanced training in Food Systems and Agri-Business Management, Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to enhance their technical advisory roles. Complementary to these activities, SIPRA distributed farmer-friendly technical booklets and conducted awareness campaigns in partnership with extension departments.

A notable achievement in 2024 was the progress under Output 1.6, focused on strengthening value chains with the use of the Challenge Fund. Business ideas were developed for 20 PAs in South Kordofan. Two of these concept notes have been approved by the Challenge Fund Evaluation Committee, with procurement processes currently underway and delivery to the targeted PAs expected by March 2025. This initiative is designed to improve value chain integration and economic opportunities for smallholder farmers by supporting local agri-businesses and enhancing market linkages.

Overall, the 2024 season marked a turning point in SIPRA's adaptive programming in South Kordofan. Through context-aware planning, flexible delivery mechanisms, and strong stakeholder collaboration, the programme reinforced resilience, contributed to strengthening local systems for inclusive and sustainable development, and deepened community ownership.

Table 5: Key Achievements: **South Kordofan State**

Intervention Area	Description	Value
Geographic Coverage	Localities Covered	2 (Kadugli, Al Reif-Shargi)
Producer Associations (PAs)	PAs Formed	26 new (80 in total)
	PAs with Concept Notes	20
	PAs with approved Concept Notes	2
Agricultural Inputs (Planting Season Support)	# Smallholder farmers reached with seeds	2000
	Sesame Seed Distributed	9000 Kg
	Sorghum Seed distributed	40,000Kg
	Sesame Area Cultivated	2 feddans per HH × 2000 HH = 4000 feddan
	Sorghum Area Cultivated	5 feddans per HH × 2000 HH = 10,000 feddans
	Total Feddans Cultivated	14,000 (2000 farmers × 7 feddans)
	Sesame Yield	186.45 MT
	Sorghum Yield	1350 MT

Progress of Agribusiness and Challenge Fund Activities: During the reporting period, significant progress was made under the Agribusiness and Challenge Fund components of the SIPRA program, with technical support from MetaMeta. A major milestone was the development and finalization of the Challenge Fund (CF) Manual, which was designed to be adaptive to Sudan's conflict-affected context. The manual streamlines application and implementation procedures to ensure rapid deployment while remaining responsive to the needs of smallholder farmers, including women and youth. The CF Manual was finalized in October 2024 following extensive consultations with consortium leadership and Area-Based Organizations (ABOs) during the SIPRA Project Managers Training in Addis Ababa. It was subsequently reviewed and endorsed by ZOA leadership.

The Challenge Fund is structured into two investment tracks. **Track 1 (Small Grants)**, ranging from €1,000 to €20,000, targets Producer Associations (PAs), informal groups, and households to address immediate value chain gaps in input provision, production, processing, and marketing. **Track 2 (Large Grants)**, ranging from €20,000 to €100,000 (proposals above €100,000 would be consider on case by case basis with approval from SIPRA Steering Committee and EKN), is tailored to catalyze partnerships between PAs and more established private sector entities, particularly those striving to rehabilitate operations amid ongoing conflict. These investments are geared toward strengthening local agribusiness ecosystems and incentivizing engagement of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as service providers in the rainfed sector.

In the last quarter of 2024, MetaMeta facilitated the rollout of ten "quick-win" small grant investments through a participatory process. Consultations with ABOs refined the concept note templates, established PA eligibility criteria, and identified priority areas for investment. A **Concept Note Evaluation Guide** was also developed to standardize the assessment process. Thirty-six (36) concept notes were received from five (5) states, with nineteen (19) reviewed (Gedaref – 10, South Darfur – 7, South Kordofan – 2) and two (2) already approved by the Evaluation and Decision Committee (EDC).

The agribusiness and Challenge Fund operations illustrate the viability and demand for structured agribusiness financing, even in fragile environments. It also highlights the growing capacity and initiative of PAs and local actors to drive inclusive economic recovery through value chain strengthening. Looking ahead, the Challenge Fund is expected to scale significantly in 2025, supporting more diversified investments across SIPRA's seven target states.

Wageningen Social & Economic Research (WSER), in 2024, WSER (formerly WCDI) made strong progress toward its mandated outputs under the SIPRA program despite the complexities brought on by the conflict and evolving priorities. Progress was made on adaptive management and knowledge dissemination. WSER played a key role in co-developing the revised ToC and supported the transition to a more dynamic, risk-informed programming model. While this report follows the previous ToC structure, several achievements were made, particularly in the area of Food Systems Resilience Assessments (FoSRAs). A new rapid FoSRA methodology was developed and fully implemented in two of the three newly added states—Gedarif and Blue Nile—with White Nile planned for early 2025. These assessments were co-designed to be conflict-, gender-, and nutrition-sensitive, and informed the identification of leverage points and development of food system resilience pathways.

Capacity building remained a central element of WSER's approach. A total of three FoSRA-related training courses were delivered and complemented by detailed guidance documents and facilitation tools to support data collection and systems mapping. Business development trainings were initiated, including a hands-on learning journey in Ethiopia that allowed participants to analyze successful women-led enterprises.

Learning journeys became central within the programme in 2024, with three core themes prioritized—coordination during crises, flexible programming in hard-to-reach areas, and challenge fund management. These are being co-developed with partner organizations, ensuring ownership and relevance across the consortium. Sense-making events were facilitated online and in Addis and Nairobi, with a larger national event scheduled for March 2025. While delays in the Challenge Fund rollout limited immediate insights on private-sector engagement, WSER collaborated closely with MetaMeta and expects to generate lessons in 2025 through joint learning efforts.

Despite several activities being deprioritized in the revised ToC—including the FARE approach, policy papers, and some international dissemination events—WSER has ensured that learning and innovation remain central to SIPRA's implementation. Key tools such as the leverage point matrix and the dynamic conflict-risk matrix were developed to guide decision-making across humanitarian, development, and peace-building interventions. These tools allow SIPRA to remain responsive and adaptive in a fluid conflict environment. WSER continues to work closely with consortium partners to ensure evidence-based, locally anchored, and conflict-sensitive programming for food system resilience in Sudan.

In 2024, several learning journeys were initiated under the SIPRA programme in close collaboration with WSER to generate evidence and capture practical insights to inform adaptive programming in Sudan's complex crisis context. These learning journeys were co-designed by the entire project team, including field staff, and are being implemented by dedicated core teams comprising at least one representative from each partner organization. Thematic priorities were carefully selected through a consultative process. Key topics include ***coordination challenges in times of crisis***, ***methodologies for assessments in hard-to-reach areas***, and ***the operationalisation of the Challenge Fund in a fragile***, ***conflict-affected environment***. Other themes explore market dynamics, the functionality of delivery systems under duress, cross-border displacement and trade, the limitations of Sudan's financial systems, and the psychological and societal toll of war. Additional learning journeys focus on frontline aid workers' perceptions, resilience stories from civilians, and the innovative practices emerging in response to the conflict. Outputs from these processes will be synthesized and disseminated as thematic briefs in 2025, contributing to broader knowledge sharing and strategic dialogue on food security and resilience in Sudan.

5. COORDINATION, PARTNERSHIP, GENDER, AND LESSONS LEARNED

Coordination: During the 2024 reporting period, SIPRA consortium partners maintained robust coordination with government line ministries, local authorities, implementing partners, and community structures across all seven target states. Ministries such as Agriculture, Livestock, Social Welfare, and Production and Economic Resources were closely involved in planning and implementing key activities, including the formation of Producer Associations (PAs), community mobilization, Farmer Field Schools (FFS), demonstration plots, seed distribution, and extension training. Multiple coordination meetings were conducted at both state and locality levels in regions such as Gedaref, East Darfur, Central Darfur, and Blue Nile to align stakeholders on program objectives, implementation methodologies, and roles and responsibilities. In Gedaref, ZOA led formal start-up meetings and facilitated the signing of a Technical Agreement (TA) with HAC and MoPER, while in Central Darfur, World Relief engaged institutions such as the University of Zalingei and the Peace Studies and Development Centre to support conflict resolution and community peacebuilding interventions. Additionally, SIPRA partners engaged actively with humanitarian and development coordination platforms to foster synergy, reduce duplication, and ensure alignment with broader sectoral priorities. Consortium partners consistently participated in FSL Cluster coordination meetings at both state and federal levels, despite interruptions caused by the April 2023 conflict. ZOA maintained regular coordination with peer organizations such as Care International and CRS to harmonize SIPRA-related interventions in overlapping localities. Coordination with INGOs, UN agencies, and technical networks further strengthened SIPRA's adaptive programming and informed learning processes. SIPRA also established advisory and technical committees to troubleshoot challenges and ensure the effective delivery of planting season support and other core activities. These efforts were instrumental in navigating operational challenges posed by conflict, economic instability, and constrained access, ensuring community-driven and technically sound implementation throughout 2024.

- SIPRA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **249 Startups** to enhance the impact and effectiveness of both the SIPRA Challenge Fund and 249 Startups' flagship programs, including the Gaith Fund, Orange Corners, and SME Catalyser Funds. This strategic partnership leverages the complementary strengths of both organizations: 249 Startups' extensive experience in managing challenge funds in Sudan and its robust network of private sector service providers, alongside SIPRA's deep-rooted presence, comprehensive assessments, and strong relationships with Producer Associations (PAs). Together, the collaboration aims to streamline support to agri-SMEs and producer groups, maximize resource utilization, and foster inclusive and sustainable market-driven development.
- SIPRA has partnered with **VIAMO** to deploy digital solutions to enhance extension and access to agribusiness resources for SIPRA program beneficiaries. VIAMO will develop and deliver agricultural content using innovative technologies to enhance farmer skills and knowledge in modern agricultural practices, climate-resilient techniques, natural resource management, agribusiness opportunities, market linkages, and inclusion and gender equity. The content will be disseminated through interactive, path-based audio games and other channels to increase farmer productivity and resilience at scale. SIPRA's engagement with VIAMO was based on learning from Mercy Corps' experience. VIAMO's proven use of Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and SMS platforms ensures scalability, accessibility, and user engagement, particularly in rural areas where traditional outreach methods face challenges. Their ability to deliver customized, interactive content through these technologies makes them uniquely qualified to achieve SIPRA's goals
- SIPRA, through an MoU, has partnered with the **Conflict Sensitivity Facility** (CSF) for technical support for conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming
- SIPRA has also signed an MoU with **SoilWatch** to collaborate to undertake ongoing monitoring and verification of the current SIPRA project across all SIPRA states and provide overall technical assistance to enhance ZOA's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems.

Implementing Partners: Throughout 2024, the SIPRA consortium maintained active collaboration with several national and local implementing partners across its target states, ensuring continuity, sustainability, and effectiveness despite conflict-induced disruptions. In South Darfur, the partnership with National Humanitarian Aid (NaHA) remained strong, with NaHA leading critical field-level activities such as the establishment of Farmer Field Schools (FFS), training of Producer Associations (PAs), and awareness campaigns on market information systems. Similarly, in East Darfur, local partner Al Massar played a pivotal role in community mobilization, mapping, and village-level implementation, contributing significantly to beneficiary identification and activity rollout. However, ZOA ended its partnership with Al Massar, due primarily to challenges with fund transfers to Al Massar and accountability, among other issues. ZOA is scoping for a new local partner. In Gedaref State, ZOA's partnership with SAHARI facilitated effective engagement with communities and stakeholders. SAHARI's local presence, acceptance, and technical capacity enabled smooth coordination, particularly during the planting season and business development components.

In Central Darfur, World Relief continued to engage its selected national implementing partner, HOPE and Friendship Development Organization (HOPE). However, the ongoing conflict severely limited HOPE's operational reach in 2024, hindering full-scale implementation. Despite these setbacks, consortium members adapted by strengthening direct collaboration with state-level government institutions such as MoPERs and MoA, which provided critical technical expertise, coordination, and monitoring support. Coordination with regulatory bodies like HAC and various agricultural service centers also enabled seamless delivery of inputs and extension services. Through these collaborative efforts, SIPRA was able to maintain program momentum, facilitate local ownership, and build resilience in the delivery of services even in volatile operating environments.

Participation of and Accountability to Affected Population: Throughout 2024, the SIPRA consortium partners ensured the consistent participation of affected populations in all phases of project implementation, with a strong emphasis on accountability and inclusion. Communities were actively engaged through consultations, validation meetings, and planning discussions, ensuring that men, women, youth, people with disabilities, and different ethnic groups were represented and their needs prioritized. Mechanisms such as open community meetings, household-level assessments, and targeted interviews enabled the design and implementation of activities that reflected community perspectives and realities. Transparent communication regarding project objectives, implementation timelines, and potential delays was a key feature of these engagements, reinforcing trust and local ownership.

To operationalize accountability, the SIPRA consortium partners—including ZOA, World Relief, and SOS Sahel—implemented formal feedback systems such as the Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) and Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM). These mechanisms provided structured platforms for beneficiaries to express concerns, offer suggestions, and request support, enabling timely and appropriate responses. For instance, in 2024, a total of **435** complaints and feedback entries were recorded by ZOA. Of these, **401** were categorized as feedback, including expressions of appreciation, suggestions for improvement, and requests for support or information within the project, while **26** were formal complaints expressing dissatisfaction. An additional 8 cases fell outside the scope of ZOA and were referred appropriately. Most complaints were resolved directly by SIPRA program officers. More complex or sensitive cases were escalated to SIPRA leadership or addressed in coordination with staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, ensuring a responsive and collaborative approach. Multiple channels were used to collect feedback and complaints, reflecting a commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, such as in-person, during community engagements, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), via WhatsApp messages, and direct telephone calls.

Orientation sessions with community leaders and local authorities clarified roles and responsibilities, fostering mutual accountability and smoother implementation. Importantly, feedback collected through these mechanisms contributed to improving program quality—for instance, refining seed variety selection and ensuring equitable resource distribution, especially among women farmer groups.

Despite access challenges in some areas due to the ongoing conflict, maintaining open lines of communication and adapting programming based on community input proved essential in strengthening accountability, equity, and effectiveness across SIPRA's interventions.

Risk Management: Throughout the 2024 implementation year, the SIPRA consortium navigated significant contextual and operational risks posed by the ongoing conflict that erupted in April 2023, which drastically altered the socio-political landscape across Sudan. The conflict led to large-scale displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and the collapse of local government systems in several target areas. In response, consortium partners, including ZOA, World Relief, SOS Sahel, and WSER, adopted adaptive program management strategies—reprogramming interventions, conducting scenario planning, and extending support to non-SIPRA states where necessary to safeguard food security and sustain project momentum. Despite the conflict, key activities such as the planting season support, producer association development, and peacebuilding through community-based conflict resolution committees continued with active community involvement. Critical mitigation efforts included close coordination with local security committees, remote access through community leaders, and ongoing dialogue with peace committees to prevent and resolve local tensions, particularly along migratory routes. From an operational standpoint, SIPRA partners remained proactive in managing risks related to inflation, cash flow, market regulation, and staff integrity. Mechanisms to mitigate fraud, ensure compliance with PSEAH policies, and manage staff turnover were enforced. Functional accountability and feedback mechanisms were maintained. The limited functionality of banking systems was addressed through engagement with alternative cash service providers and flexible procurement but consortium partners and donor compliance, and budgeting strategies.

Gender: Gender equality and women's empowerment were intentionally mainstreamed across all SIPRA interventions in 2024. Consortium partners made strong efforts to ensure the inclusion of women and the youth in planning, design, implementation, and monitoring of project activities. In recognition of the disproportionate barriers women face, particularly in patriarchal contexts such as Gedaref, Central Darfur, and Blue Nile—the SIPRA project aimed to create equitable opportunities for participation and benefit. Women played active roles in producer associations (PAs), demonstration farms, vegetable production groups, homestead gardens, and Farmer Field Schools (FFS). Special consideration was given to include female representatives in PA executive structures, with clear progress noted in states like Central Darfur and Blue Nile, where 40% of PA members were women. Additionally, youth and women were targeted for agribusiness support and capacity-building interventions. In Gedaref, 70% of members in agricultural PAs were women, with some being 100% female-led.

The consortium's gender-sensitive approach also extended to community engagement, with inclusive beneficiary targeting criteria, consultations, and participatory planning ensuring that women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities were adequately represented. In South Darfur, women were directly involved in the beneficiary selection process, and the proportion of women benefiting from agricultural input distribution, training, and extension services grew as awareness of gender inclusion increased. Across all states, sex- and age-disaggregated data was systematically collected and used to monitor equitable participation. Gender-specific constraints, including limited access to decision-making, were actively addressed through sensitization sessions and leadership development. This commitment to gender inclusion not only enhanced women's economic empowerment and social standing but also ensured that project results reflected the priorities and needs of all community segments.

Environment: Environmental sustainability and climate resilience were integral to SIPRA's design and implementation across target states in 2024. The consortium partners implemented multiple strategies to mitigate environmental degradation, promote sustainable resource use, and support climate-smart agriculture. In response to environmental challenges such as deforestation, drought, and locust infestation, particularly severe in East Darfur, ZOA, in close coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Agricultural Research Corporation (ARC), developed and delivered tailored extension packages. These included sustainable practices like composting, proper seed spacing, pest management, improved irrigation systems, and the use of raised beds and watering channels in vegetable farming. Additionally, SIPRA promoted environmental awareness by training smallholder

farmers on the selection of suitable soils, weed control, and harvesting and post-harvest handling techniques that minimize environmental impact.

SOS Sahel's expertise in natural resource management was instrumental in embedding environmentally friendly practices throughout the SIPRA program. The project adopted a community-led participatory planning approach, enabling stakeholders to assess and mitigate the potential environmental impacts of SIPRA interventions. Through training workshops and field-level technical support, the project emphasized the preservation of natural resources, conflict prevention related to land and water access, and environmental protection measures. Community-led monitoring was applied to track the impact of specific inputs, especially concerning water resource management and soil health. These efforts aimed to enhance resilience to climate shocks and restore environmentally degraded areas, reinforcing SIPRA's commitment to safeguarding the environment while boosting agricultural productivity and livelihoods.

Lessons Learned: The 2024 implementation year for the SIPRA program provided critical lessons in navigating a fragile and conflict-affected operating environment.

- One of the key takeaways was the necessity of adaptive programming and flexible approaches. The outbreak of war in April 2023, with its ripple effects on transportation, banking systems, and commodity supply chains, revealed the vulnerability of programmatic assumptions. Solutions such as utilizing local enterprises for cash delivery, forming partnerships with private sector actors, and leveraging alternative procurement routes (e.g., South Sudan and West Kordofan) proved vital. In South Kordofan, adapting to internet and cash system interruptions through local workarounds (e.g., UN internet access and "Bankak" mobile application) ensured continuity of operations. Additionally, SIPRA partners learned that effective engagement with diverse local authorities and armed entities, paired with early stakeholder involvement and consistent coordination with HAC, security offices, and communities, is essential for smooth activity implementation in contested and insecure regions.
- Another significant lesson was the importance of community inclusion and realistic programming. As instability and inflation continued to impact operational logistics and commodity prices, SIPRA partners recognized the value of reducing activity scope to focus on critical, impact-driven interventions aligned with core program milestones. Furthermore, SIPRA's approach to participatory engagement, particularly with women, yielded important social outcomes such as increased female participation in PAs, FFSs, and demo plots led to greater empowerment and confidence among women, challenging pre-existing norms and ensuring their voices were heard in decision-making.
- Coordination with EKN and maintaining transparency through evidence-based updates enabled timely adjustments to programming. Tools like the "continuum of stability" and triangulated information from local focal points helped mitigate information gaps in rapidly shifting contexts. These combined experiences emphasize that flexibility, inclusion, and localized solutions are vital for resilience and sustainability in complex crises.
- The high inflation rate and continuous rise of commodities prices, such as fuel, and accordingly increased operational costs, will impact the overall budget of the project.

6. FINANCE

The financial report for 2024 is currently being finalized and will be submitted once the ongoing audits of all consortium partners are completed. Both the financial report and the audit findings will provide a complete picture of the year under review's spending and will be shared as soon as all individual partner audit results are available.

In 2024, total expenditures reached EUR 3.95 million, which represents approximately 47% of the annual budget of EUR 8.4 million. Of this amount, EUR 2.34 million was spent on regular SIPRA programming, while an additional EUR 1.61 million was used to support and strengthen production activities during the 2024 planting season. While progress was made, total spending was lower than originally projected. This was mainly due to program adjustments, the transition from Euroconsult MottMacDonald to the new Technical Service Provider (MetaMeta), and preparations for launching the

Challenge Fund (including both small and large grants). Many of these activities are expected to result in increased expenditures in 2025.

By the end of 2024, total project expenditure stood at EUR 6.5 million, which represents 28% of the total project budget. The ongoing conflict has also led to increased operational costs. This is reflected in the high share of spending—54%—on project office operations, the highest among non-activity-related costs. In contrast, staffing costs remain in line with the original SIPRA timeline, accounting for about 40% of total expenditures.

With the revised Theory of Change and the programme's expansion into three additional states, we expect a significant increase in spending in 2025 and 2026, particularly with the rollout of the Challenge Fund.

It is worth noting that the Planting Season Support activities in 2023 and 2024 have used EUR 2.38 million out of the original EUR 3.5 million allocated to the Large Grant Challenge Fund, leaving a balance of EUR 1.16 million available for future disbursement.

ANNEX 1: SIPRA Updated Log Frame Matrix



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ANNEX 2: Risks and Risks Management



SIPRA%20Proagam%
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