

South Sudan Protection of Civilians Report 2022

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Introduction

This report is the culmination of a collaborative research effort to satisfy the requirements of a Brown University Group Independent Study Project at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, facilitated by Professors David Polatty and Theodore Shanks. It provides an overview of key facts, data, and analysis of issues related to civilian protection, civilian harm, and humanitarian concerns in South Sudan from 2021 through March 2022. In a few cases, information from April and May 2022 has been provided.

Background

On July 9, 2011, the Republic of South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, but has faced challenges in governance, security, and infrastructure since its independence.¹ The power struggle between South Sudan's two largest ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer, led to an eruption of violence in 2013, after political struggles between president Salva Kiir and the vice president Riek Machar.² The violence eventually devolved into a complex and years-long civil war that led to an estimate of 380,000 deaths and displaced millions.³

Since 2013, therefore, civilians have been targeted for their ethnicities. According to the United Nations (UN) Commission for Human Rights in South Sudan, the extent of the targeting of civilians based on their ethnicities in South Sudan may amount to ethnic cleansing. Further, hate speech and threats against non-Dinkas also remained prevalent in the country. And as explained by the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, "the signs are all there for the spread of ethnic hatred and targeting of civilians that could evolve into genocide."⁴ He

¹ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, February 2022, 13.

² "Civil War in South Sudan," Center for Preventive Action, accessed May 11, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-south-sudan>.

³ Daniel Sullivan, "Do Not Forget: Aiding and Protecting Civilians in South Sudan." Refugees International. Refugees International. January 13, 2022.

<https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2022/1/11/do-not-forget-aiding-and-protecting-civilians-in-south-sudan>.

⁴ "South Sudan Case Study." n.d. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed May 15, 2022. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/south-sudan/case-study>.

expressed his concern once more in February 2017.⁵ Finally, the 2016 peace agreement, followed by a Revitalized Peace Agreement in 2018, ended most fighting at the national level.⁶

According to Human Rights Watch, violence has declined in most of South Sudan since “the signing of the 2018 peace deal and creation of a transitional government of national unity in February 2020.” Despite this, some violence remains “with sporadic fighting and related abuses” between non-signatories and sub-national groups.⁷ Instances of sub-national violence include “armed clashes, killings, sexual violence, abductions and looting/destruction of property and resources [including cattle raiding].”⁸ This violence leaves civilians at risk both directly and indirectly through access constraints. The dynamics of civilian protection will be discussed in the report below.

Main Concerns

8.9 million civilians are in need in South Sudan, half of whom are children.⁹ **Food insecurity** has been a severe and consistent concern in South Sudan, with this year set to be the worst one yet. As of mid-March 2022, 8.3 million people (or more than 70% of the population) are “set to face extreme hunger in the coming months.”¹⁰ There are also **WASH** (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) **concerns** related to flooding and other challenges, and “only 40 percent of the population has access to safe water and only 10 percent to adequate sanitation.”¹¹ US\$1.7 billion is necessary to reach the targeted 6.8 million vulnerable people in South Sudan in 2022.¹²

Humanitarian access is impeded by armed groups, flooding, warehouse raiding, and more. At least 129 aid workers (most of them South Sudanese) have been killed by various actors, including government forces and militias, since December 2013.¹³ Violence against

⁵ “Statement by the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on the Situation in South Sudan, February 2017.” n.d. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Accessed May 15, 2022. <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/statement-by-the-un-special-adviser-on-the-prevention-of-genocide-on-the-situation-in-south-sudan-february-2017/>.

⁶ “South Sudan Case Study.” n.d. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed May 15, 2022. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/south-sudan/case-study>.

⁷ “South Sudan,” Human Rights Watch, accessed May 2, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/africa/south-sudan>.

⁸ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 18.

⁹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*.

¹⁰ “Families pushed to the limit as South Sudan braces for its worst hunger crisis ever,” World Food Programme, March 11, 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/news/families-pushed-limit-south-sudan-braces-its-worst-hunger-crisis-ever>.

¹¹ Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network, *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*, February 3, 2022.

¹² “Urgent funding needed to address the humanitarian needs of 6.8 million people in South Sudan in 2022,” OCHA, March 31, 2022.

¹³ “South Sudan: Quarterly Humanitarian Access Snapshot,” OCHA, June 2021, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/south_sudan_access_snapshot_2021_q2.pdf.

humanitarians and humanitarian assets continues, sometimes with looting related to poverty and discontent. Approximately one-eighth of the people in need of assistance in 2021 were in counties with high access constraints.¹⁴ In addition, **climate change** is inextricably linked to many of the issues that are facing South Sudan. As explored in this report, climate impacts such as severe flooding cause problems on their own in addition to exacerbating existing challenges like food insecurity.

Other Concerns

There are various other economic, social, and political concerns—such as corruption, inflation, and governance—that will not be explored in-depth in this report. As an example, the justice system in South Sudan is not sufficient to manage criminal activity and safeguard human rights in the country.¹⁵ The vast majority of cases are heard in customary courts, which are predominantly headed by older men with patriarchal belief systems that influence their decisions in favor of men.¹⁶

Vulnerable Populations

Children

Children “make up 65 percent of the more than 2.3 million refugees who have fled the most recent conflict that broke out in 2013,” and many of them are undocumented, unregistered at birth, and/or stateless, resulting in challenges accessing resources.¹⁷ In mid-2021, around 1.4 million children under 5 were “projected to suffer from acute malnutrition,” and “75 percent of all child deaths in South Sudan are due to preventable diseases.”¹⁸ Children are also susceptible to war crimes and other abuses, including sexual violence, recruitment and use of children in combat, attacks on civilian infrastructure, and physical injury, murder, and abduction.¹⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated issues affecting children, like poverty and displacement. As a result, UNICEF’s 2015 estimate of 35,000 children living and working in the streets has likely grown significantly since the onset of the pandemic.²⁰

¹⁴ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 27.

¹⁵ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 14.

¹⁶ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 14.

¹⁷ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

¹⁸ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

¹⁹ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

²⁰ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

Many schools across South Sudan are closed, damaged, or being used as temporary shelters. Even operational schools have limited access to safe water sources and hygiene products like soap, reducing the quality of education and incentives for families to send their children to school. Displacement, violence against teachers, limited financial resources in communities, low teacher salaries and incentives, and long commutes to school additionally impact access to schooling in South Sudan.²¹ As a result, many children do not have consistent access to education, an issue that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. During cattle raids and other incidences of violence, “children were at the risk of recruitment into local defense groups and other forms of abuses, including abduction and possibly trafficking.”²² Over 680 children were separated from their parents or orphaned in Tambura County in June 2021 in sub-national violence.²³ Especially for **girls**, child marriage is prevalent; almost half of girls are married by age 18, and the closing of schools during the pandemic has made the issue worse.²⁴ In addition, menstruating girls often “have high drop-out or low attendance rates in school as they missed lessons while menstruating and found it hard to catch up.”²⁵ **Children with disabilities** face even greater hurdles due to a lack of inclusive infrastructure and teaching pedagogy.²⁶

Women and Girls

In addition to educational challenges as children, women and girls are vulnerable to many issues, “including high levels of poverty, low levels of literacy, pronounced gender gaps in education and political representation,” and **widespread gender-based violence (GBV)**.²⁷ South Sudan has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, at more than 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births.²⁸ Dowry payments, husbands’ rights, and gender stereotypes impact married women and their custody and property rights, interacting with the dynamics of gender-based violence.²⁹ GBV often occurs when women and girls are collecting firewood or food outside their homes,³⁰ where they are vulnerable to violence not only from other humans, but are also at

²¹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 16.

²² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 18.

²³ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 29.

²⁴ “At risk of rape outside and violence in South Sudan POC camp – will women and girls ever be safe?” UNFPA ESARO, June 18, 2020.

²⁵ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 34.

²⁶ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 32.

²⁷ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

²⁸ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

²⁹ *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

³⁰ “At risk of rape outside and violence in South Sudan POC camp – will women and girls ever be safe?”

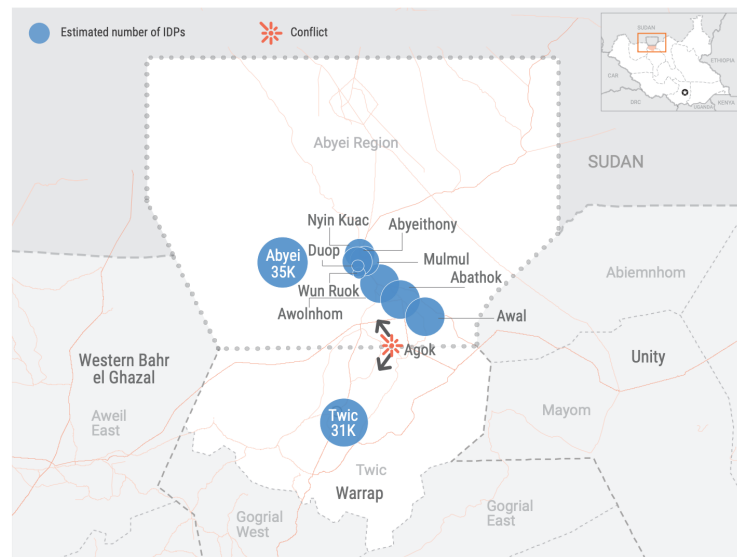
risk of snake and crocodile attacks, especially when crossing flooded fields.³¹ Reported sexual offenses include “rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, torture, or forced nudity.”³² In an effort to avoid GBV incidents, “nearly 40 percent of women and girls reported having to avoid essential public places like water points, washrooms and markets, as well as firewood collection sites.”³³

Residents of the Abyei Administrative Area

Shown in the map,³⁴ the Abyei Administrative Area (AAA) between Sudan and South Sudan is a particular area of concern. Challenges in this region are exacerbated by the fact that it is not claimed by Sudan or South Sudan as part of either state. Outbreaks of violence have resulted in the deaths of at least 60 people since early

February 2022, and this violence drives significant displacement.³⁵ Armed attacks have occurred on convoys carrying UNISFA peacekeepers in the region.³⁶ This violence has led to the suspension of humanitarian aid in some places; the WFP suspended operations in early March due to an increase in violence.³⁷ While humanitarian activities in AAA resumed a few weeks later, they remained at limited capacity. A small number of people have returned to their homes

HOTSPOTS AND DISPLACED POPULATION



³¹ “Women and girls in South Sudan battle mounting sexual violence amid conflict and climate crises,” UNFPA, April 20, 2022, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/women-and-girls-south-sudan-battle-mounting-sexual-violence-amid-conflict-and-climate-crises>.

³² *10 Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan*

³³ “Women and girls in South Sudan battle mounting sexual violence amid conflict and climate crises.”

³⁴ “Abyei Administrative Area (AAA): Humanitarian Situation Overview-People Impacted by Violence in Agok and Anet,” March 2022, OCHA and Partners.

³⁵ “Abyei Administrative Area (AAA): Humanitarian situation overview - people impacted by violence in Agok and Anet,” OCHA, March 2022, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/abyei_humanitarian_overview_march.pdf.

³⁶ “Statement on Increase in Violence in the Southern Part of Abyei Area, Call for Dialogue,” UNISFA, March 8, 2022, <https://unisfa.unmissions.org/statement-increase-violence-southern-part-abyei-area-call-dialogue>

³⁷ “WFP South Sudan: Situation Report #299,” World Food Programme, March 10, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP%20South%20Sudan%20Situation%20Report%20%23299%20-%2010%20March%202022.pdf>.

in AAA following an agreement between hostile parties, but most people remain displaced without sufficient shelter.³⁸

Other Populations

Men and boys face “the risk of recruitment by armed forces,” and thus “tend not to engage in activities such as collecting firewood, water and food” to protect themselves.³⁹ Boys often drop out of school due to the risk of revenge killings.⁴⁰ **People with disabilities** “face greater challenges to access services, with greater challenges experienced among women and especially children.”⁴¹ There are high levels of stigma around disability that cause community exclusion and vulnerability to mental health and protection risks.⁴² Similarly, people with disabilities and **elderly people** are at risk of violence because they may not be able to flee as easily and they are often left at home alone during the day.⁴³ **People with HIV/AIDS** experience discrimination and low access to HIV interventions, testing, and treatment.⁴⁴

Violence Against Civilians

Overview

Although 2021 brought with it a 42% reduction in the violence against civilians in comparison to 2020, it still remains a serious concern in South Sudan. Further, there is a surge of fighting documented in Tambura, Western Equatoria,, between ethnic militias allegedly affiliated with conventional parties. This surge of violence has resulted in 440 deaths, 18 injured, 74 abductions, 64 victims of sexual violence, and an estimated 80,000 people displaced. In 2021, UNMISS deployed peacekeepers to the affected conflict areas, with 116 temporary operating bases to enhance protection of civilians through sustained long and short distanced patrol. This process also included engagement in political and community consultations at the local, state,

³⁸ “Response to people impacted by violence in Agok and Aneet–Situation Report No. 1,” OCHA, April 22, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/response-people-impacted-violence-agok-and-aneet-situation-report-no-1-22-april>.

³⁹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 14.

⁴⁰ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 38.

⁴¹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 14.

⁴² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 32.

⁴³ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 33.

⁴⁴ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 33.

and national level to ensure local voices have been included. Further, a humanitarian-development nexus approach has also been adopted.⁴⁵

Recent developments

Although the war in South Sudan ended in 2018, the violence did not stop subnationally. Civilians continued to experience violence and were killed in intercommunal clashes and attacks from government forces and rebel groups. Sexual violence has always remained frequent with few offenders held accountable. Violence continued in various regions of the country with many cases associated with clashes among the political elites torn by ethnic differences. In 2020 alone, the violence in South Sudan took an estimated 2000 lives. Armed violence, which affected civilians at subnational level, also significantly increased since 2020. Despite the establishment of a transitional government in 2021 to bring justice to the people in South Sudan, they have yet to realize their promise.⁴⁶

Review of 2021

Specifically in 2021, violence remained a major concern and continued to intensify, following the trends from previous years. One of the major causes of violence is associated with concerns of land and livestock. The increase in livestock mortality and decline in farm yields can lead to the disruption of traditional migration routes and thus augment the risk of conflict among civilians. On the same note, subnational violence associated with attacks on civilians also frequently involved the armed cattle keepers and cattle raids, which exacerbated the displacement of people. In particular, the hotspots for these conflicts included Jonglei, Lakes, Warrap, and Western Equatoria. Furthermore, the deterioration of the security situation was also linked to subnational and localized violence.

All in all, multiple forms of violence against civilians were found. They included killing, injury, rape, abduction, looting, and destruction of housing and property. These acts of violence often occurred in remote areas where the victims had little or no access to immediate health services. The local children were also at risk of being recruited to local defense groups and other

⁴⁵ “Violence against Civilians in South Sudan Reduced Significantly in 2021.” 2022. UNMISS. February 17, 2022. <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/violence-against-civilians-south-sudan-reduced-significantly-2021>.

⁴⁶ “South Sudan Case Study.” n.d. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed May 15, 2022. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/south-sudan/case-study>.

forms of abuses including abduction and possibly trafficking, extending the acts of violence against civilians over generations.⁴⁷

2021 showed a sharp decline in violence against civilians with 3,414 civilian victims. Among them, 75% were men, 14% were women, and 11% were children. Similarly, the cases of conflict-related gender-based violence declined from 211 cases in 2020 to 194 cases in 2021. With that being said, in comparison to the situation in 2020, Warrap remained the state with the highest number of reported incidents with 24% of the total cases of violence against civilians in South Sudan. This is followed by Western Equatoria with 19 percent, and Jonglei and Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPPA) with 17 percent each. Most of these acts of violence were committed by armed community-based militias across Jonglei and the GPPA.⁴⁸

Present Situation - January to March 2022

In 2022, there appears to be a continued decrease in violence against civilians. Between January and March of 2022, UNMISS recorded 173 incidents of violence against civilians. These incidents affected 754 victims overall, including 300 killed, 266 injured, 125 abducted and 63 subjected to sexual violence. Overall, in comparison to the same quarter in 2021, this demonstrates a 32% decrease in the number of incidents of violence against civilians. However, the specific number of civilians impacted by these incidents remain unchanged at around 754 civilian victims, suggesting that each incident on average likely involved more civilians.⁴⁹ Most of the victims were found in Eastern Equatoria, Central Equatoria, and Jonglei states, which are also the areas most affected by intercommunal violence during dry seasons.⁵⁰

Despite the decline in the incidents of violence against civilians, this remains an issue requiring great concern in 2022. Ongoing violence persists in Leer county and conflict tensions remain across the country. GBV remains an acute issue. Specifically, two survivors reported that they were raped and gang-raped repeatedly after they were forced to come out of hiding to find food for children. Another woman also reported that she was raped and severely beaten for three days. Likewise, looting also remains a serious concern. In Leer town, thousands of cattle were

⁴⁷ “South Sudan - United States Department of State.” 2021. U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. November 4, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/south-sudan/>.

⁴⁸ “South Sudan: Sharp Decline in Violence against Civilians | | UN News.” n.d. United Nations. United Nations, February 17, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112172>.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Division United Nations Mission in South Sudan, “Brief On the Human Rights Situation in South Sudan,” Accessed May 11, 2022, 1. https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/hrd_quarterly_q1_brief_-_10_may_2022.pdf

⁵⁰ Human Rights Division United Nations Mission in South Sudan, “Brief On the Human Rights Situation in South Sudan,” Accessed May 11, 2022, 4. https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/hrd_quarterly_q1_brief_-_10_may_2022.pdf

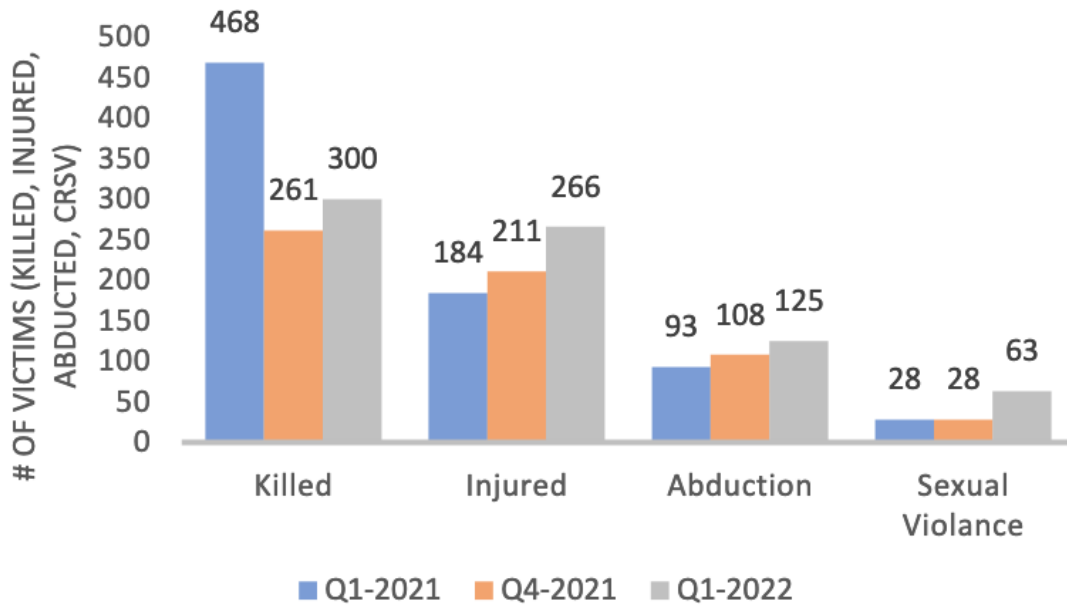
raided during attacks and homes, humanitarian facilities and warehouses were also looted and burned to the ground. UNMISS is currently investigating the violence in Leer County and Mayendit and Koch counties, and also deployed additional peacekeepers to fortify the patrolling forces to prevent further loss of life. In total, there has been a surge in fighting in South Sudan, resulting in “widespread devastation.” As a result, numerous people were reported to have been killed and wounded, women abducted and raped, homes burned, and properties looted.⁵¹ As a result of the continued violence in South Sudan, the UN renewed the peacekeeping forces’ mandate on March 15, 2022, extending its mandate until March 2023. With a ceiling of 17,000 troops and 2,101 police personnel, they have been assigned several tasks, including the protection of civilians and prevention of GBV.⁵²

Further, according to UNMISS findings on May 10th, 2022, there is also a rise in gender-based violence that is associated with conflict in comparison to the same time in 2021. From January to March 2022, UNMISS recorded 63 cases of sexual violence, which shows a drastic increase from the 28 documented in the same period in 2021. Therefore, despite the decrease of incidents in violence against civilians, incidents of sexual violence has more than doubled.⁵³

⁵¹ “South Sudan: ‘Hellish Existence’ for Women and Girls, New UN Report Reveals | | UN News.” n.d. United Nations. United Nations. Accessed May 16, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114312>.

⁵² “Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Mission in South Sudan, Adopting Resolution 2625 (2022) by 13 Votes in Favour, 2 Abstentions,” UN Security Council Meetings Coverage for 8995th meeting, March 15, 2022, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14830.doc.htm>.

⁵³ “Press Release: Amidst a Decrease in Violence against Civilians in South Sudan, a Surge in Conflict- Related Sexual Violence Peacekeeping.” n.d. United Nations. United Nations. Accessed May 16, 2022. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/press-release-amidst-decrease-violence-against-civilians-south-sudan-surge-conflict-related-sexual>.



Number of victims in Quarter 1 and 4 of 2021 and Quarter 1 of 2022⁵⁴

Human Rights Violations

Human rights violations remain a pervasive issue across South Sudan. In fact, human rights violations and abuses have been a widespread concern in the country since 2013, and this continues to be defined as a “protection crisis” by the UN, which entails all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the individual’s rights following the human rights law.⁵⁵

As mentioned earlier in this section, the establishment of the transitional government in South Sudan did not alleviate these issues. Armed violence continued to increase in Jonglei, Tonj North and East of Warrap State in 2021. There were also persistent clashes and incidents in Central and West Equatoria.

South Sudan has historically seen decades of human rights violations and abuses in the region along with violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). With these violations, there has also been a climate of impunity and lack of accountability, which can be attributed as the root causes of conflict and insecurity that led to the persistence of these human rights violations. As noted by the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, the inability to

⁵⁴ Human Rights Division United Nations Mission in South Sudan, “Brief On the Human Rights Situation in South Sudan,” May 10, 2022, 1.

⁵⁵ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 82; “OCHA on Message: Protection,” OCHA, Accessed May 15, 2022. <https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/120405%20OOM%20Protection%20final%20draft.pdf>

address past grievances and continued impunity remain primary factors in the renewed conflict and continued violations of human rights and IHL in South Sudan and thus affected the prospects of sustainable peace and development. With the increase of armed conflict causing harm to civilians (with community-based militias and civil defense groups linked to national level actors) at the subnational level since 2020, human rights violations have also worsened.⁵⁶

Accountability remains an issue that continues to lead to the exacerbation of human rights violations. Specifically, according to the Humanitarian Needs Overview of 2021, access to formal justice for all populations remains highly limited and hampered by the lack of adequate judges, prolonged investigations, negative attitudes towards formal legal systems and due process, and the fear of revenge due to lack of witness protection. The limited presence of law enforcement officials and increased armed groups' activities in host communities also allowed the further perpetration of human rights abuses.⁵⁷

A notable example of these abuses is the violence that occurred in Tambura County of Western Equatoria in 2021, where human rights violations and abuses were significant, including the targeting of civilians based on gender and ethnicity. According to the UNMISS Human Rights division, at least 440 people were killed and over 80,000 were displaced.⁵⁸

Among all human rights violations, GBV remains one of the most critical threats to protection and wellbeing of women and children. Specifically, the key protection issues in this case are sexual abuse, rape, and harassment of women and girls. In these cases, the key challenges in addressing protection needs is that up to 80% of the South Sudanese households are headed by females. In turn, concerns of housing, land, property, income-generating opportunities, and physical security, which all disadvantage female heads of families, remain significant issues to these households. Even though women household heads made up such a large number of all households, they wield comparatively little influence over community decision-making processes. In addition, the weaknesses in South Sudanese family law in the statutory and customary systems also undermined the defense of women's rights and their ability to seek redress. This is particularly evident in cases seeking justice for sexual violence, as the

⁵⁶ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 22.

⁵⁷ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 22.

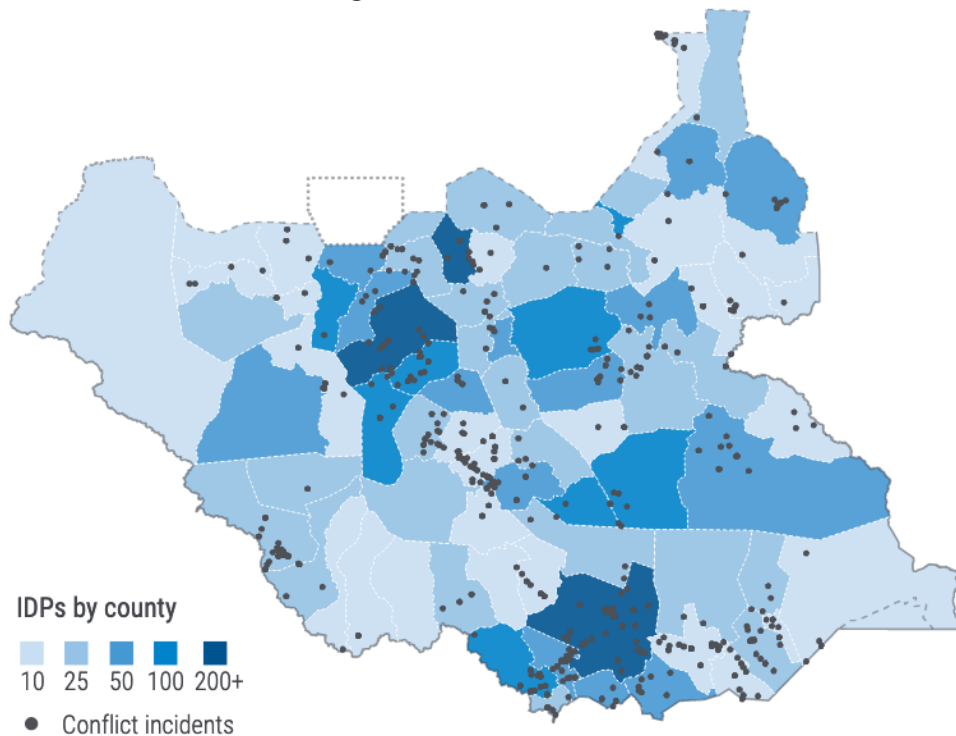
⁵⁸ "South Sudan: Hundreds of Killings among Grave Violations and Abuses Committed against Civilians in Tambura County." 2022. OHCHR. March 1, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/south-sudan-hundreds-killings-among-grave-violations-and-abuses-committed>.

legal system remains unreliable and is viewed as favoring the preservation of family image rather than individual rights.⁵⁹

Displacement

As of May 2022, there are over 4 million people displaced in South Sudan who require dire humanitarian assistance. Among them include refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and asylum-seekers.⁶⁰ Overall, South Sudan has created one of the largest, and fastest growing, refugee crises in the world. The number of South Sudanese refugees and displaced persons also continues to rise, with the majority of them being women and children.⁶¹

Displacement of South Sudanese People



IDPs by Counties in South Sudan⁶²

⁵⁹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 22.

⁶⁰ "South Sudan." n.d. International Rescue Committee (IRC). Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.rescue.org/country/south-sudan>.

⁶¹ "Transforming Lives." n.d. U.S. Agency for International Development. Accessed May 16, 2022. <https://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/south-sudan-refugeesb>'.

⁶² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 21.

As of December 2021, there are 2 million people who are internally displaced in South Sudan and 2.3 million South Sudanese displaced in surrounding states. These externally displaced South Sudanese are mainly in the 5 surrounding states. Among them, Ethiopia holds 443,000 South Sudanese refugees (according to figure from May 2018), which is more than half of the total refugee population in Ethiopia. Overall, South Sudan is experiencing the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the fourth largest crisis in the world, following Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan.⁶³ 63% of South Sudanese displaced are children.⁶⁴ Close to half of the displaced were already displaced in 2020 and 2021, climbing to more than 550,000 in 2021. Subnational violence in conflict hotspots of Jonglei, Lakes, Warrap, and Western Equatoria has been a particularly salient factor contributing to the displacement. General insecurities in South Sudan are also cited as a significant contributor to displacement. Among the people displaced, many reported that they have been displaced multiple times for prolonged periods, which, in turn, further exacerbated their vulnerabilities.⁶⁵

These displaced South Sudanese populations remain highly vulnerable. Even though the humanitarian community has been working closely with the South Sudan Government to support the implementation of the National Framework on Solutions and the Action Plan on Solutions and Return for 2020-2022, challenges of security and lack of available services persist. The displaced and returnees continue to be exposed to protection risks from ongoing conflict and struggles to access support. Across the host, IDP, and returnee communities, sexual harassment and abuse, killings, abductions, violence and looting continue to obstruct access to livelihood opportunities. These issues also caused limitations to accessing necessary services. Further, the lack of clarity on housing and land rights in South Sudan also may lead to potential conflicts and result in a situation in which people's ability to improve their living standards remain limited if not diminished, and thus incapable of recovering from the crisis.⁶⁶ Many displaced people, along

⁶³ "The 10 Largest Refugee Crises to Follow in 2022." 2022. Concern Worldwide. April 25, 2022. <https://www.concernusa.org/story/largest-refugee-crises/>.

⁶⁴ "South Sudan Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News: USA FOR UNHCR." n.d. South Sudan Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News | USA for UNHCR. Accessed May 16, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/south-sudan/>.

⁶⁵ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 23.

⁶⁶ See more in https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CSRF-Land-Conflict-and-Displacement-in-South-Sudan_22Nov2021-final.pdf

with other migrants, have also moved to urban areas, which has led to urban overcrowding, “increasing the risk that grievances among urban migrants could escalate into violence.”⁶⁷



Internally Displaced Persons in South Sudan as of December 2022⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Nupi. n.d. “Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet South Sudan.” NUPI. Accessed May 16, 2022. https://www.nupi.no/nupi_eng/News/Climate-Peace-and-Security-Fact-Sheet-South-Sudan2.

⁶⁸ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 24.

Refugees Currently Living in South Sudan

South Sudan itself hosts nearly 338,000 refugees, with the majority from Sudan. Among them, 53% are hosted in Upper Nile State, 38% in Unity State, and the rest in Central and Western Equatoria and Jonglei states. These refugees very often reside in poor and insecure areas with host communities who are living under similar underserved conditions with both the host and the refugees having limited access to services and protection assistance. For most of these refugees, voluntary return would not be an option due to both their countries of origin and limited resettlement opportunities. Displacement also places additional burdens on host communities because of the additional pressure placed on the already limited food stocks of the host communities in South Sudan. These additional burdens, in turn, may result in the intensification of tensions in the country which may thus further worsen the displacement.

Current Assistance

Seeking solutions to preservation of displaced people's rights and building resilience to shocks and stresses of displacement is one of the three strategic objectives of humanitarian response in South Sudan. In August 2021, the UN Inter-Cluster Coordination Group launched a response to address the increased needs of hundreds of thousands of people affected and displaced by flooding in the six most affected states - Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Upper Nile, and Warrap.⁶⁹ As of May 7th, 2022, the United Nations also released 19 million USD to support aid for those affected by the flood.

Despite these efforts, aid provided remains greatly insufficient. Most recently, as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) stated on April 25th, 2022, the humanitarian community in South Sudan failed to scale-up the aid required for the tens of thousands displaced in Twic County who are in need of food, shelter, and sanitation. According to the MSF head of mission for South Sudan, Siusana Borges, "the situation in displacement camps is terrible" and "people are living in makeshift shelters made of sticks and cloth. Parents are literally pulling leaves from the trees and cooking them to feed their children because of lack of food."⁷⁰

The limited focus of humanitarian aid on these particular needs remains a major issue. Specifically, as the response efforts remain focused on the general needs of affected people at

⁶⁹ "2021 Humanitarian Response in Review South Sudan," UNOCHA, Accessed April 2022, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/humanitarian_response_in_review_2021.pdf

⁷⁰ "South Sudan: Tens of Thousands of People Urgently Need Aid ..." n.d. Accessed May 1, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-tens-thousands-people-urgently-need-aid-after-fleeing-clashes>.

large, the specific needs of people who are displaced remain substantial and are not effectively addressed.

Food Insecurity

Food shortage remains one of the foremost issues in the past ten years in South Sudan. In fact, a combination of conflict and climate change factors have consistently left South Sudan one of the world's hungriest nations. The country experienced a famine in 2017, and now, in 2022, it is once again facing similar conditions in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap states due to renewed violence, the worst flooding in almost 60 years, and the impacts of COVID-19.

Historical Overview: Famine 2017

In February 2017, South Sudan experienced a widespread famine - the first famine declared by the United Nations in the past 6 years.⁷¹ The 2017 famine affected more than 100,000 South Sudanese, with an additional 1 million on the brink of hunger. Not only is lack of food causing devastating harm to the South Sudanese people but also the lack of basic drugs as well, leaving many others helpless.

More broadly, in this period, as highlighted by Sharmila Devi in *The Lancet*, across Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria, and South Sudan, there were almost 20 million people at risk of starvation because of war and drought. This figure included 10 million children. As one foreign observer in Juba told *The Lancet*, “the suffering in South Sudan is of almost Biblical proportions but it is man made” and that “[the] UN and NGOs are doing what they can and they should. But there are also big questions that are impossible to answer about whether it's immoral to pay for salaries of health workers, teachers, and so on, when the government and militias are waging war and don't care about the people. It will likely get worse before it gets better.”⁷²

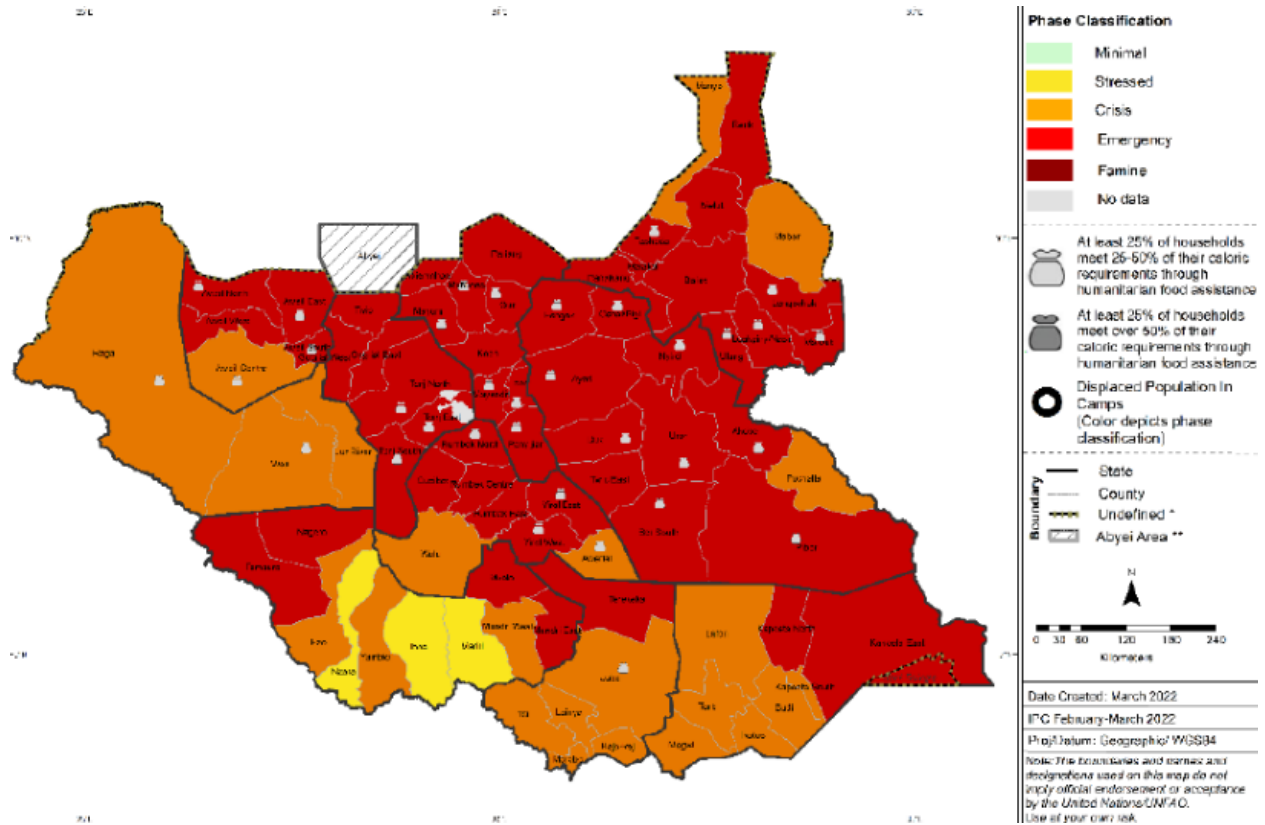
This foreign observer continued to assert that the 2017 famine appeared to have been caused by many human factors beyond nature. This included a resurgence of conflict, threats to aid workers and civilians on the ground, a lack of resources, and the South Sudanese government's lack of attention to health. Many of these factors continue to play factors in today's

⁷¹ The last famine prior to that was 2011 in the Horn of Africa.

⁷² Sharmila Devi, 2017. “Famine in South Sudan.” *The Lancet* 389 (10083): 1967–70. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(17\)31351-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(17)31351-x).

2022 famine. The 2017 famine also resulted in a significant level of displacement, causing 1.9 million to be internally displaced and 1.6 million to flee to neighboring countries.⁷³

Today: In 2022



South Sudan Food Security Phase Classification Projection for April to July 2022⁷⁴

In 2022, South Sudan is once again facing another famine. This famine is predicted by the UN to be the worst hunger crisis in the history of South Sudan. Currently, an estimated 8.3 million people will face severe food insecurity and 2 million children under 5 and women will face acute malnutrition. In total, the UN predicted that 70% of the South Sudanese people will struggle to survive the peak of the annual “lean season” this year. The country is facing conditions similar to the 2017 famine, especially throughout the regions of Northern Bahr el

⁷³ Sharmila Devi, 2017. “Famine in South Sudan.”

⁷⁴ World Food Programme, “WFP South Sudan Situation Report 300,” April 2 https://api.godocs.wfp.org/api/documents/1a23b9b89ae94c029c9286f1075e095b/download/?_ga=2.53382816.924609452.1652348910-229160764.1651060314

Ghazal and Warrap primarily due to renewed violence, the worst flooding in almost 60 years, and the impacts of COVID-19.⁷⁵

Among other factors, floods play a major role - a part of the latest unprecedented cycle of climate disasters. Floods have severely impacted agriculture by destroying land, crops, and livestock, as well as affecting the harvest and planting seasons. These impacts were felt acutely in Upper Jole, Lakes, and Jonglei states, affecting 835,000 people and displacing 350,000. Beyond resulting in dire hunger, the flooding also forced many into changing to communal living - a decision that likely would increase exposure to COVID-19.⁷⁶

Likewise, violence is also a significant contributing factor to the hunger crisis of 2022. Specifically, the deterioration of security is found to be linked to subnational and localized violence. In turn, the organized subnational and local violence prevented households from accessing fields, livestock, and other income-generating activities. They also disrupted trade and market functioning which thus drove up food prices and constrained humanitarian access. Further, the insecurity also impacted the livelihoods of all segments of affected people. This led to limited access to land for cultivation. As a result, the households preferred cultivating homesteads over cultivation at farms as movement came to be disrupted. In addition, the increased violence also placed women at higher risk of being unable to cater to family needs of fuel and water.⁷⁷

The persistence of COVID-19 also exacerbated this hunger crisis. Specifically, economic downturns and drops in oil prices further constrained the new South Sudanese government's ability to implement the peace deal whose implementation is already heavily delayed.⁷⁸ This further delay, in turn, is likely to exacerbate the aforementioned two factors contributing to the hunger crisis.

⁷⁵ "South Sudan Bracing for 'Worst Hunger Crisis Ever' | | UN News." n.d. United Nations. United Nations. Accessed May 16, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113802>.

⁷⁶ Oxfam, "As rains in South Sudan start again flooding communities face more flooding amid a growing hunger crisis, says Oxfam," Reliefweb, April 6, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/rains-south-sudan-start-again-communities-face-more-flooding-amid-growing-hunger>

⁷⁷ "Food Assistance Fact Sheet - South Sudan: Food Assistance." 2021. U.S. Agency for International Development. July 12, 2021. <https://www.usaid.gov/south-sudan/food-assistance>.

⁷⁸ Madhav, Joshi, "The Effects of Covid-19 On Peace Agreement Implication," 2020. <https://www.prio.org/download/publicationfile/2118/Joshi%20et%20al.%20-%20The%20Effect%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Peace%20Agreement%20Implementation,%20PRIO%20Paper%202020.pdf>

Existing Humanitarian Assistance

Several humanitarian organizations are already present on the ground in South Sudan to address the hunger crisis. As of December 2021, 4.2 million people received food assistance and livelihood support. There has also been an inter-sector increase in distribution of aid to nearly 453,000 people in highly food-insecure areas to avert famine across six counties, including Akobo, Pibor, Aweil South, Tonj North, Tonj South, and Tonj East. For example, World Vision assists caregivers to provide emergency food for their children. In total, World Vision has provided 1,000 of the most vulnerable families affected by the flooding with vitamin-rich foods. An example of the vitamin-rich foods include Vitameal, a high protein rice provided to families to ensure that the children had sufficient access to nutrients. Likewise, Oxfam is supplying food, water, and hygiene to the most vulnerable populations, including those who have fled to remote islands. This includes over 500,000 people with emergency and longer-term support. The specific aid provided by Oxfam include regular emergency food distributions, clean water, safe sanitation facilities, essential hygiene items, and promotion of good hygiene practices. Oxfam also provided vouchers for canoes to help people on islands to travel to mainlands when needed. In addition, Oxfam also distributed cash and vouchers to families to use in functioning markets and supported traders to reinforce connections between communities.⁷⁹

Despite these efforts, funding remains a significant issue. In the nutrition cluster alone, 205 million USD is required to supply sufficient aid. As of December 2021, only 64 million USD is funded and thus only 35% of the required funding is accounted for.⁸⁰

Climate Change and Environment

South Sudan is “ranked among the five countries in the world most vulnerable to climate change.”⁸¹ Mean annual temperatures across South Sudan have increased about 0.4°C every

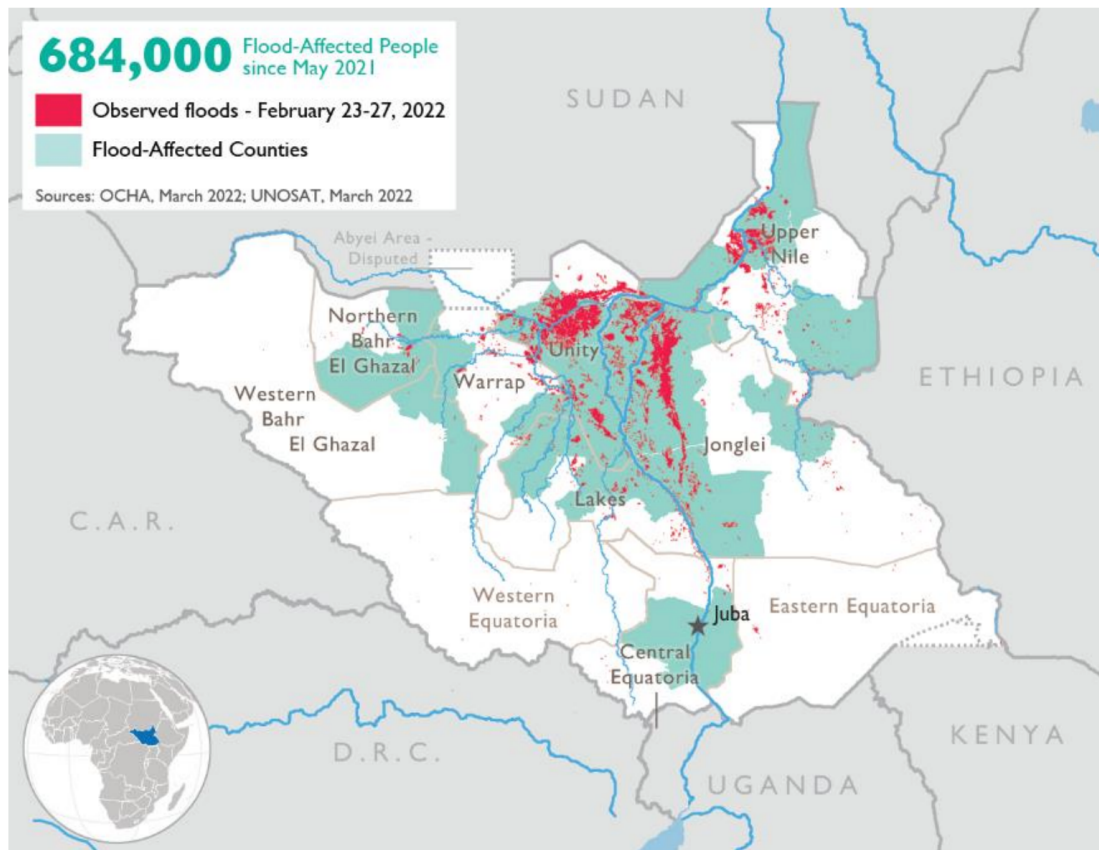
⁷⁹ “Hunger Crisis in South Sudan.” 2021. Oxfam International. December 1, 2021. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/emergencies/hunger-crisis-south-sudan>.

⁸⁰ “South Sudan 2021 Humanitarian Response in Review,” UN OCHA, Accessed April, 2022. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/humanitarian_response_in_review_2021.pdf

⁸¹ “Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in South Sudan directs relief and mitigation to submerged areas and warns of a climate crisis,” UN OCHA, November 12, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/humanitarian-coordinator-ai-south-sudan-visits-flood-affected-areas-and-warns>

decade for the last thirty years, and the average temperature is projected to increase up to 1.5°C by 2060, “leading to a warmer and drier climate.”⁸²

“Torrential rains, seasonal flooding, and locust infestations”⁸³ have been regular challenges for decades, but they have become more intense and frequent in the last few years. In



Areas affected by floods in South Sudan, as of March 2022⁸⁴

some places, South Sudan has seen an unprecedented three consecutive years of severe flooding.⁸⁵ Although the South Sudanese people have established patterns of coping with floods and other climate events over decades, the new intensity and frequency of these events have “scrambl[ed] normal migration and coping patterns,” causing distress.⁸⁶ As shown in the map

⁸² “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan,” Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, March 2022,

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/220055FactSheetSouthSudan_UpdateLR5%5B60%5D%5B76%5D.pdf

⁸³ “Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in South Sudan directs relief and mitigation to submerged areas and warns of a climate crisis”

⁸⁴ “South Sudan: Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #3”

⁸⁵ “UNHCR responding to worst flooding in decades in South Sudan,” UN News, October 19, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1103442>.

⁸⁶ “Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in South Sudan directs relief and mitigation to submerged areas and warns of a climate crisis”

above, more than 835,000 people were impacted by flooding in the latter half of 2021,⁸⁷ especially in Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile states. In 2020, that number was over one million.⁸⁸

Andrew Harper, UNHCR’s Special Advisor on Climate Action, called attention to both the humanitarian consequences of inaction and the financial consequences.⁸⁹ Ignoring climate change and its devastating impacts on communities and infrastructure will end up being more costly in the long run, both in terms of mortality and price tag. Harper emphasized the importance of investing in “preparedness, early warning, and adaptation.”⁹⁰

Population Vulnerabilities

Around 95% of the South Sudanese population “is dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods like traditional rainfed agriculture, crop farming, pastoralism and animal husbandry,” making the livelihoods of South Sudanese people exceptionally vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.⁹¹ In turn, heavy livestock farming like that found in South Sudan “contributes to emissions, local environmental damage, and land degradation, making land vulnerable to erosion and resource scarcity.”⁹² Additionally, more than ninety-five percent of South Sudanese “depend on charcoal, firewood, and grass for cooking,”⁹³ which contributes to deforestation and is not sustainable, even without the threat of climate change.

Exacerbation of Challenges

The flooding also exacerbates existing challenges in the country, including lack of healthcare access, displacement, WASH issues, food insecurity, and humanitarian access challenges in South Sudan. The countries bordering South Sudan experience similar climate impacts, which can in turn affect South Sudan. For example, “cross-border cattle migration from

⁸⁷ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3,” OCHA South Sudan for the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), December 14, 2021, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/south_sudan_flooding_sitrepre_december_2021_14dec2021.pdf.

⁸⁸ “On World Humanitarian Day, South Sudan’s Humanitarian Country Team warns of a climate emergency and calls for an end to violence against aid workers in South Sudan,” UN OCHA, August 19, 2021, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2021_world_humanitarian_day_-_south_sudan_hct_press_release.pdf

⁸⁹ “UNHCR concerned at climate change impacts in South Sudan,” UNHCR, March 15, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/3/623068d66/unhcr-concerned-at-climate-change-impacts-in-south-sudan.html>

⁹⁰ “UNHCR concerned at climate change impacts in South Sudan”

⁹¹ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

⁹² “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

⁹³ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

Sudan into areas like Upper Nile state brings with it veterinary diseases, immigration and jurisdiction challenges” that compound with existing governance challenges.⁹⁴

Health Impacts

“Over 50 health facilities have been affected by floods” in South Sudan, as of late 2021.⁹⁵ Even when health facilities are available and functioning, some “communities have been cut off [by the floodwaters] and can only access the health facilities through canoes, which is expensive” and much less feasible for people with disabilities.⁹⁶ People in many areas do not have access to safe, clean water, which increases their risk of suffering from “waterborne diseases such as acute watery diarrhea,” and “malaria is the top cause of morbidity.”⁹⁷ Because of the effects on health facilities, many people may not have access to sufficient treatment for these waterborne diseases.

Displacement

Floods have impacted displacement camps, such as one in Bentiu town in Unity State, resulting in prolonged or repeated displacement.⁹⁸ To get there, many people displaced by floods must walk to safety; UNHCR teams in mid-2021 “met around 1,000 people who had walked for seven days to reach Malakal” and safety there. Many of them were hungry, and some had ended up “marooned on islands surrounded by water, sheltering under trees and unable to cross to safety,” according to UNHCR Representative Arafat Jamal.⁹⁹ Flooding is therefore making the already-challenging situation of displacement more complicated and prolonged. Flood-related displacement is also driving people into areas in which they are living in close quarters with livestock, causing WASH issues and illness for both humans and animals.

Food Insecurity

“The loss of farmland and harvested stocks, lack of access to wild foods and pasture for animals, increased morbidity and mortality for...livestock due to unhygienic conditions...[and] prevalence of livestock diseases” are among the serious impacts of the flooding on food access in

⁹⁴ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

⁹⁵ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

⁹⁶ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

⁹⁷ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

⁹⁸ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

⁹⁹ “UNHCR responding to worst flooding in decades in South Sudan”

South Sudan.¹⁰⁰ “In Jonglei, Upper Nile, Warrap and Unity states, 75 nutrition sites structures were affected by floods, with 47 sites being relocated and eight sites closed.”¹⁰¹ Additional flood-related consequences in the food security sector are discussed in the “Food Insecurity” section of this report.

Humanitarian Access

As of mid-December 2021, around 60,000 people in northern Lakes State were unreachable due to flooded roads.¹⁰² The “humanitarian hub” in Unity State is at risk of flooding, which “could lead to higher operational costs.”¹⁰³ In some areas, canoes are the only realistic method of transportation, which impacts many people—but especially those with disabilities or children—when trying to reach humanitarian assistance distribution points.¹⁰⁴ In places with poor road infrastructure, airstrips are important to humanitarian access in South Sudan, but some have been submerged by floods and rendered unusable, such as one in Old Fangak.¹⁰⁵

Exacerbation of Conflict and Violence

Displacement from floods “can also provoke inter-communal conflict,” especially when displaced communities must join host communities on continually smaller patches of land, and resources become scarcer.¹⁰⁶ Herders and farmers who have long standing mobility patterns and routes have been impacted by the floods as well, causing rising tensions between them, “often in connection with land, grazing, water, and communal affairs.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, “climate-related livestock losses compounded by pre-existing rivalries increase the risk of cattle raiding, which can trigger retaliation, communal conflict, displacement, deepening intercommunal rivalry and the formation of armed groups.”¹⁰⁸ “There is evidence that political and communal militias active in the civil war are linked to increasing farmer–herder violence, which weakens resilience to the adverse effects of climate change and reduces the opportunities for adaptation.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

¹⁰¹ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

¹⁰² “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

¹⁰³ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

¹⁰⁴ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

¹⁰⁵ “UNHCR concerned at climate change impacts in South Sudan”

¹⁰⁶ “UNHCR concerned at climate change impacts in South Sudan”

¹⁰⁷ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

¹⁰⁸ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

¹⁰⁹ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

Sociopolitical Dynamics

“Before and since independence, South Sudan’s political leaders and elites have accumulated wealth from cattle, making many complicit in cattle-related conflicts and resource exploitation. Elites have incentives to maintain, or even expand, cattle farming, but climate-related stress, raiding practices and the civil war have inflated livestock prices to the extent that they affect the livelihood opportunities of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, and negatively impact the citizenry in general.”¹¹⁰

“Climate impacts in South Sudan are further exacerbated by human actions like deforestation, illegal timber exportation and charcoal production. In particular, the latter is a lucrative business for armed groups, communities and affiliated political elites. Unregulated charcoal production involving soldiers from the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces (SSPDF) has expanded along the Juba–Bor road in the Equatoria regions. Illegal logging has been documented around the Southern National Park, Lantoto National Park, Western Equatoria and Yambio.”¹¹¹

“Research indicates that political leadership deficits and economic mismanagement have played a key role in South Sudan’s water-related and other resource conflicts, highlighting the importance of climate-sensitive development.”¹¹²

Current Strategies for Coping

The government and UNMISS have responded by installing temporary dykes and water pumps, as well as food assistance, shelter, medicine, and other supplies.¹¹³ “Community-based support is being provided through cash-for-work and food-for-work assistance, with flood-affected communities working alongside humanitarian organizations to repair and build dykes.”¹¹⁴ Berms and ridges are also being built to protect almost 20,000 flood-displaced people in Bentiu and Rubkona town in Unity State.¹¹⁵

The WFP and Danish Refugee Council have been supporting some households with Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programming, supporting 2000 flood-affected households with

¹¹⁰ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

¹¹¹ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

¹¹² “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

¹¹³ “Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in South Sudan directs relief and mitigation to submerged areas and warns of a climate crisis”

¹¹⁴ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

¹¹⁵ “South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No. 3”

farming education, including education about adaptive floating gardens, backyard kitchen gardens, and vegetable farming.¹¹⁶

Health Impacts

Due to many factors, including poor WASH conditions, lack of functional and accessible health facilities, and displacement, the health of the South Sudanese people is suffering. The South Sudanese people face one of the poorest life expectancies in the world at 57 years old, and the under-five mortality rate is one of the highest in the world at 90.7 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹¹⁷ There is only one physician per 65,574 people in the country,¹¹⁸ and “only 63 percent of the population can access health facilities in one hour time.”¹¹⁹ This issue is made worse by the fact that more than half of South Sudan’s health facilities are non-functional due to violence, flooding, use as places of refuge, and other factors. Even functional health facilities are experiencing disruption in the supply chains for medical equipment and medicines, and therefore are not always able to adequately serve the population’s medical needs.¹²⁰

Those with chronic medical issues, older persons, separated and unaccompanied children, persons with disabilities, and unaccompanied children are most vulnerable to health issue aggravation in areas with low health care coverage. In addition, “extremely low” vaccine coverage in children leaves them vulnerable to preventable diseases.¹²¹ For women, a lack of female health workers is a barrier to some seeking care.¹²² Despite high levels of trauma and mental health conditions resulting from the ongoing conflict, insecurity, and COVID-19, there are only three senior psychiatrists in South Sudan.¹²³ Unresolved trauma can interfere with parent-child relationships and cause infant failure to thrive,¹²⁴ leading to long-term issues like attachment disorders and elements of intergenerational trauma.

¹¹⁶ “WFP South Sudan: Situation Report #299”

¹¹⁷ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 11.

¹¹⁸ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 11.

¹¹⁹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 26.

¹²⁰ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 16, 26.

¹²¹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 34.

¹²² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 34.

¹²³ “In South Sudan, stigma and underfunding plague mental health care,” *Al Jazeera*, January 18, 2019,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/1/18/in-south-sudan-stigma-and-underfunding-plague-mental-health-care>.

¹²⁴ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 31.

COVID-19

Vaccination rates were at less than 1.5 percent as of the end of 2021,¹²⁵ but have risen slightly to 4 percent by April 2022. Almost all healthcare workers are fully vaccinated. The 7-day average of reported cases is stable as of early April 2022, and the expanded use of rapid antigen tests is allowing case detection in remote areas. Most reported cases are from pre-travel screenings, and almost two-thirds of cases are reported in Juba. Frozen doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, donated by the New Zealand and Portuguese governments arrived in early April 2022 and the WHO reported “no shortage of vaccines and no doses at risk of expiring.”¹²⁶

Logistics and Access

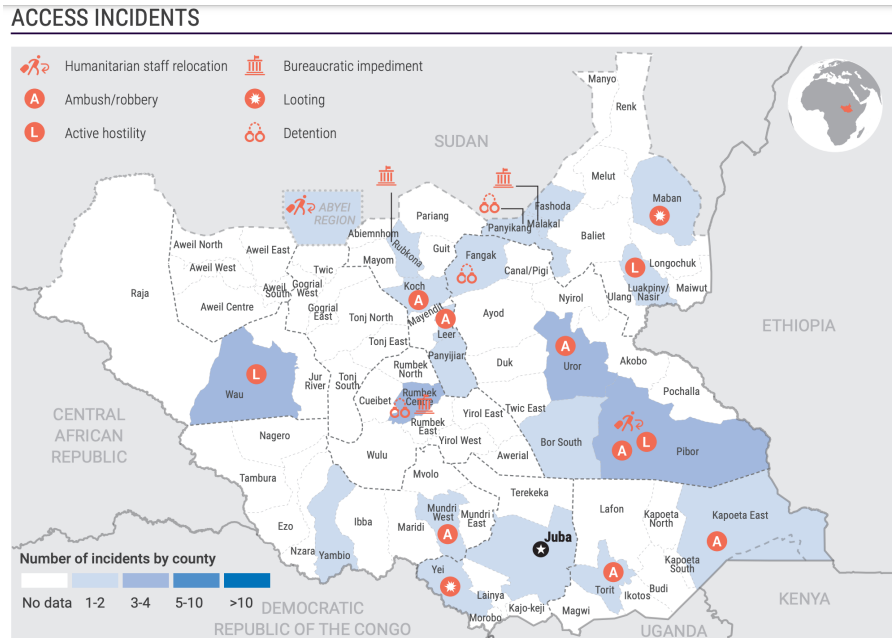
There were nearly 600 incidents affecting relief workers in 2021.¹²⁷ Fortunately, though, “the overall number of reported incidents in the first quarter decreased by 19%” between 2021 and 2022.¹²⁸ There were 38 incidents in March 2022, 25 of which involved violence or threats against humanitarian personnel or assets; these incidents are shown on the map.

¹²⁵ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 16.

¹²⁶ “COVID-19 Update for South Sudan,” World Health Organization South Sudan, April 7, 2022, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/covid-19_update_south_sudan_7apr2022.pdf.

¹²⁷ “South Sudan: Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #3,” USAID, March 11, 2022, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021_03_11%20USG%20South%20Sudan%20Complex%20Emergency%20Fact%20Sheet%20%233.pdf.

¹²⁸ “South Sudan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot,” OCHA, March 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South%20Sudan%20-%20Humanitarian%20Access%20Snapshot%20%28March%202022%29.pdf>.



Access Incidents in South Sudan as of March 2022¹²⁹

Infrastructure Challenges

Less than 2% of the roads in South Sudan are paved, and unpaved roads can become inaccessible during the rainy season.¹³⁰ River transport and air cargo transport, the latter being more timely, are essential in South Sudan. However, some airstrips are only accessible by helicopter in certain weather conditions, making air transport an expensive means of moving goods.¹³¹ Climate change-related intensification of seasonal flooding will continue to make some roads accessible for a smaller period of time than in the past, and already more than 60% of roads “become impassable during the rainy season.”¹³²

Violence Against Humanitarians

Unfortunately, there have been numerous instances of violence against humanitarians in South Sudan that can impact humanitarian access. In total, 322 humanitarian workers were relocated in 2021 due to violence.¹³³ In February 2022, 13 of the 33 humanitarian access constraint incidents involved violence. Most incidents occurred in Central Equatoria, Upper Nile,

¹²⁹ “South Sudan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot”

¹³⁰ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 93.

¹³¹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 93.

¹³² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 12.

¹³³ “Abyei Administrative Area (AAA): Humanitarian situation overview - people impacted by violence in Agok and Anet.”

and Unity states, and 61 humanitarian staff were relocated due to national and sub-national violence.¹³⁴

Violence in Twic County, Warrap State, and the Abyei Administrative Area has led to humanitarian operations being temporarily suspended. A clearly marked humanitarian vehicle was attacked in Unity State in February resulting in the injury of three health workers.¹³⁵ Roadside ambushes have led to serious consequences for the pre-positioning of humanitarian supplies.¹³⁶

In Leer County, two MSF staff members have been killed since December 2021, along with dozens of civilians. The second staff member, killed on April 10, 2022, was Peter Mathor Tap, an individual who had been working for MSF in Leer for over a decade and had a disability resulting from having polio as a child. The MSF clinic remains operational, but these types of attacks often dissuade organizations from providing assistance in violent areas.¹³⁷

Other Logistics and Access Challenges

The looting and destruction of humanitarian supplies and assets can also lead to the suspension of activities in South Sudan. One such incident involving more than a million dollars' worth of supplies occurred in May 2021 in Gumuruk.¹³⁸ Norwegian Refugee Council warehouses were looted four times in February 2022, depriving about 23,000 people of aid and causing some operations to be suspended. A WFP warehouse in Unity State and a WFP convoy in Jonglei state were looted as well.¹³⁹

Humanitarians also experience “frequent operational interference and bureaucratic impediments,” which can vary between state and county levels. “Tensions related to perceived bias in the recruitment of national staff led to attacks” in Torit, Renk, and Pariang.¹⁴⁰ Further population returns are expected in 2022, creating a larger population of returnees that need humanitarian assistance.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ “Abyei Administrative Area (AAA): Humanitarian situation overview - people impacted by violence in Agok and Anet”

¹³⁵ “Abyei Administrative Area (AAA): Humanitarian situation overview - people impacted by violence in Agok and Anet”

¹³⁶ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 27.

¹³⁷ “MSF strongly condemns latest violence after staff member shot and killed,” MSF, April 19, 2022,

<https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/msf-strongly-condemns-latest-violence-after-staff-member-shot-and-killed>.

¹³⁸ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 27.

¹³⁹ Kaamil Ahmed, “Looting and Attacks on Aid Workers Rise as Hunger Adds to Unrest in South Sudan,” *The Guardian*, March 15, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/15/south-sudan-hunger-aid-workers-attacks-looting>.

¹⁴⁰ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 27.

¹⁴¹ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 27.

Recommendations

Vulnerable Populations

Women and Girls

The UNFPA supports life skills training, which over 700,000 women and girls took advantage of in 2020.¹⁴² Programs like these may allow women and girls to gain important skills and make a living in a safer environment. UNFPA also offers sexual and reproductive health services, protection, and information to women and girls in South Sudan.

In November 2021, the government of South Sudan “held its first interactive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of the Discrimination Against Women” and launched a committee to implement an action plan addressing conflict-related sexual violence.¹⁴³ The South Sudanese government should continue engaging with local, national, and international mechanisms to create and implement policies that protect women and girls from discrimination and GBV. The UN could facilitate connections between governments in the region that are working to address similar or related issues, possibly by collecting resources or ideas that could be made accessible to diplomats and NGOs.

Residents of the Abyei Administrative Area

The Governments of Sudan and South Sudan need to renew their commitment to determining the final status of Abyei.¹⁴⁴ A final determination of the region’s status will allow consistency and continuity in security forces, governance, justice, aid, and other operations that protect civilians, as well as provide the region with a stronger sense of stability.

Climate

Most of the current coping strategies are temporary, like building dykes or pumping water out of certain areas, and do not address the larger issues. With widespread South Sudanese habits and livelihoods dependent on a healthy climate and environment, yet often contributing to local

¹⁴² “Women and girls in South Sudan battle mounting sexual violence amid conflict and climate crises.”

¹⁴³ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 14-15.

¹⁴⁴ “Security Council hears of ‘trust deficit’ in disputed Abyei region,” UN News, April 21, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116602>.

degradation, local leaders familiar with the culture and landscape must become involved with helping the community get on board with solutions like renewable sources of energy for cooking.

Some current strategies are local, but longer-term. For example, water supply infrastructure needs to be redesigned, “including the relocation of water intake structures to higher ground in response to rising water levels.”¹⁴⁵ Programming like the FFA programs with the WFP and Danish Refugee Council can support flood-affected people in finding innovative and sustainable ways to support their families and obtain food, even when there is catastrophic flooding.¹⁴⁶

There is also a global need for an increase in the collection and analysis of climate and weather data. This data can help meteorologists and climate scientists track climate change and predict natural disasters, allowing pertinent policy changes to be made and accurate, timely evacuation orders to be given.¹⁴⁷ In South Sudan, this could mean tracking climate patterns that affect livestock herding and anticipating floods. The Systematic Observations Finance Facility (SOFF) is working in 75 countries, including South Sudan, to “enable them to generate and share data with the global observing system.”¹⁴⁸ States that are able should invest in solutions like SOFF to address vulnerabilities in the countries facing the brunt of climate change despite contributing very little to the problem themselves. Indeed, “systematically gathering and analyzing data and assessing climate, livelihoods, food security, migration (including transhumance) and conflict trends, in order to be better positioned to generate early warning information and anticipatory preventive responses” can help countries like South Sudan better anticipate important climate and weather patterns to protect civilians.¹⁴⁹ This might look like issuing early flood evacuation warnings and directing mediation or other resources towards areas susceptible to changing patterns of livestock herding or displacement.

Ultimately, global advocacy is needed to address climate change and its root causes to prevent further degradation of the climate situation in South Sudan and other countries

¹⁴⁵ Dr. Mesfin Loha, “Our planet and our health under siege: What can we contribute for healthier tomorrow?” World Vision, April 6, 2022,

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/south-sudan/our-planet-and-our-health-under-siege-what-can-we-contribute-healthier-tomorrow>.

¹⁴⁶ “WFP South Sudan: Situation Report #299”

¹⁴⁷ Paula Dupraz-Dobias, “How Climate Data Scarcity Costs Lives,” *The New Humanitarian*, March 1, 2022,

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2022/03/01/how-climate-data-scarcity-costs-lives>.

¹⁴⁸ Petteri Taalas, Achim Steiner and Inger Andersen, “COP26: how plugging data gaps will transform our response to climate change,” November 21, 2021,

<https://alliancehydromet.org/cop26-how-plugging-data-gaps-will-transform-our-response-to-climate-change/>

¹⁴⁹ “Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan”

vulnerable to climate change. South Sudan alone cannot solve these complex problems without the support of other countries, especially those that contribute significantly to climate change.

Violence Against Civilians

Church communities are quite influential in South Sudan, and getting religious leaders on board with community-based interventions may prove to be a crucial strategy. For example, World Vision led a workshop about sexual abuse prevention that engaged local faith leaders. The workshop contextualized issues in ways that were important and meaningful to locals, and one local religious leader expressed his subsequent trust in and appreciation for World Vision.¹⁵⁰ Interventions like World Vision's can both support local leaders in their goals as well as create goodwill between NGOs and people on the ground. In addition, visits by outside leaders like the Pope can be influential. The Pope is planning a trip to Juba in July 2022 to promote peace, and has been actively supportive of the peace process since 2019, when he brought South Sudanese leaders together in the Vatican for a two-day retreat.¹⁵¹ Continued support by international figures like the Pope may provide an extra catalyst for change.

“In January 2021, South Sudan agreed to establish the Hybrid Court alongside the Commission for Truth, Healing and Reconciliation to try war crimes committed during the more than six years of conflict. The operationalization of these, however, is yet to happen.”¹⁵² It is imperative that the government of South Sudan act promptly to operationalize the Court and Commission to ensure justice for the people of South Sudan.

Some communities, such as the Kuku community in Kajo-Keji County in Central Equatoria State, have robust traditional justice systems. However, these justice systems are in need of review and documentation, which various NGOs and local groups can assist with. One recommendation from the Kajo-Keji County Women Association was that at least three out of ten chiefs should be women. This goal should be increased to suggest that five out of ten chiefs be women, once the original recommendation is achieved. Court buildings must also be

¹⁵⁰ Betty Adong, “World Vision boosts safeguarding awareness in South Sudan to protect women and children from abuse,” March 6, 2022,

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/south-sudan/world-vision-boosts-safeguarding-awareness-south-sudan-protect-women-and>.

¹⁵¹ “South Sudan Nuncio: Pope’s visit will promote peace,” *Vatican News*, April 7, 2022,

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2022-04/pope-apostolic-journey-peace-south-sudan-conflict.html>

¹⁵² *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 15.

rehabilitated to facilitate hearings, since many hearings are now occurring in leaders' houses.¹⁵³ Other communities may also benefit from similar reforms of traditional justice systems and infrastructure, providing residents with more options to seek justice without relying on the lagging national systems.

Food Insecurity

Cattle Raids

Cattle raids have been a persistent issue in South Sudan, and they are connected to various challenges, including food insecurity, displacement, and local violence. Further investigation into the causes of cattle raiding in South Sudan might be beneficial to the humanitarian community in finding the best and most effective solutions.

Addressing the root causes is likely to be the most effective solution in the long term. "Climate-related livestock losses compounded by pre-existing rivalries increase the risk of cattle raiding," according to the Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet.¹⁵⁴ Addressing climate change as discussed above can, over time, ease these livestock losses. Addressing food insecurity at large may reduce any hunger-related causes of cattle raiding. Providing local or traditional meat products when possible as part of food insecurity interventions may help.

In the shorter term, some communities affected by cattle raids have requested increased police or defense support. In areas where this request cannot be fulfilled by local police forces, UN peacekeeping forces could help step in with the support of the South Sudan government, now that the peacekeeping mandate has been renewed. Alternatively, local leaders could be trained in basic defense strategies. Arming or training local leaders could exacerbate existing tensions or conflicts, so local knowledge would need to inform whether that is a feasible and safe option.

Health Impacts

The Ministry of Health, WHO, and partners "conducted two rounds of oral cholera vaccination in Rubkona and Bentiu Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Unity State

¹⁵³ Jale Richard, "Community in South Sudan's Central Equatoria State Calls for Revival of Customary Justice System," February 9, 2022, <https://southsudan.iom.int/stories/community-south-sudans-central-equatoria-state-calls-revival-customary-justice-system>

¹⁵⁴ "Climate, Peace, and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan"

protecting almost 200,000 people.”¹⁵⁵ Vaccine and other disease prevention campaigns like this program can protect South Sudanese communities from communicable diseases, especially when flooding and other environmental conditions exacerbate their transmissibility. Global funding and logistical support from INGOs and governmental entities can make similar campaigns more widespread and successful. Flexibility is important, as programs may have to adapt to flooding, widespread and irregular displacement, and lack of consistent identity documentation. Any health interventions should “act on the social and economic determinants of climate change and health,” and be sure to address the most marginalized groups and vulnerable individuals when implementing interventions.¹⁵⁶

Humanitarian Access and Logistics

As a short-term solution, the “pre-positioning of commodities in strategic locations” can help alleviate the challenges that humanitarians face due to impassable roads and transportation infrastructure during the rainy season.¹⁵⁷ Pre-positioning comes with its own challenges, like security and properly predicting needs, but when possible it can be an important tool. Political solutions that reduce administrative barriers, cooperation with Sudan in the AAA and border areas, and addressing larger problems like climate-related flooding can also alleviate access and logistics problems. The UN has consistently condemned the violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, which is a practice that must continue. Media campaigns that focus on these condemnations and events of violence may be effective to increase funding and support of the humanitarian operations in South Sudan.

Conclusion

With so many devastating conflicts and humanitarian crises occurring simultaneously across the world, South Sudan is often forgotten. The humanitarian system is overwhelmed, and future innovations and greater funding will be necessary to alleviate suffering in South Sudan and other countries. Governments, organizations, and individuals across the globe need to work together to care for people in need of humanitarian assistance and protect civilians from harm.

¹⁵⁵ “South Sudan recommit to enhancing efforts to improve climate change-induced health threats including flooding,” WHO, April 11, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-recommits-enhancing-efforts-improve-climate-change-induced-health>.

¹⁵⁶ “South Sudan recommit to enhancing efforts to improve climate change-induced health threats including flooding”

¹⁵⁷ *Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan*, 93.

The situation in South Sudan exemplifies how climate change can be inextricably linked with violence, suffering, and real-time consequences, and the world also must come together to slow climate change before its effects spread any further.

In a time of humanitarian crises, civilians are the most impacted, with their everyday lives drastically altered and upended. Among them, the vulnerable groups are even more significantly affected with the inequalities they already face further worsened. Today, as we continue to find increasing numbers of unprecedented levels and scales of humanitarian challenges and crises, the international aid community must further come together to continue to alleviate suffering and protect human dignity. Although this report is by no means a comprehensive examination or recommendation of the humanitarian crisis of South Sudan, we hope to at least shed some further light on these challenges at hand to move one step closer to one day achieving that more just and equal world that we continue to work and aspire towards.

Abbreviations

AAA: Abyei Administrative Area

FFA: Food Assistance for Assets

IDP: Internally Displaced Person(s)

MSF: Doctors Without Borders

SOFF: Systematic Observations Finance Facility

UNFPA: UN Population Fund

UNISFA: United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

UNMISS: UN Mission in South Sudan

WASH: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

WFP: World Food Programme

WHO: World Health Organization

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