

## South Sudan's Hunger and Its Impact on Women and Children

### Introduction

South Sudan has emerged as one of the most urgent hunger hotspots by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. As defined by the FAO, hotspots are regions experiencing dangerously limited access to food and widespread malnutrition [meaning a lack of](#) essential vitamins and minerals to live a healthy and active lifestyle". Today, a prediction of 7.7 million individuals in South Sudan are suffering from food insecurity. This crisis is fueled by a deadly combination of armed conflict, economic collapse, climate shocks, and severe flooding, all which continue to disrupt food production and supply chains across the country.

These overlapping crises have affected vulnerable groups such as women and children in the affected communities of South Sudan. Malnutrition rates among children have reached high risk levels, while women responsible for strengthened food security and care for families are prone to gender based violence and health complications due to food scarcity. This case study focuses on **South Sudan**, analyzing how worldwide and domestic systems categorize food predicaments and assess vulnerability. The region continues to be a crucial element for humanitarian aid and long-standing resilience efforts to build and strengthen the effectiveness of food security and reduce dependency on foreign aid, which can be structured through recognizing the factors that contribute to food insecurity.

### Root causes

#### Conflict and Violence

Despite the 2018 Peace Agreement that ended the civil war and sought to end the humanitarian crisis there is a clear protracted conflict and violence in several counties such as Upper Nile and Jonglei states which have experienced displacement and disruption on agricultural production. Mass displacement has exposed vulnerable populations, especially **women and children**, to severe malnutrition and broader health risks. **Malnourished mothers struggle with reduced breast milk production**, leading to **poor maternal health and stunted growth among infants and adolescents**.. [According to the World Food Programme, South Sudan](#) an estimated 2.4 million children are currently at risk of malnutrition. Women and girls

who have fled the instability crisis are prone to sex trafficking or sexual assault and are also at the risk of being compelled into sex workers

### **Economic Crisis**

Alongside conflict and violence South Sudan's deepening economic crisis has further undermined food security. The country's dependency on oil revenue has backfired as declining oil prices and disrupted production have caused revenues to decline dramatically. As of April 2025 there was a report in [South Sudan is returning to war](#) claiming that the government only recently paid its public servants, including soldiers, after they had gone without paychecks for more than a year. A weakening security structure and army defection has been caused in part by this lack of revenue. The [World Bank's South Sudan Economic Monitor](#) notes that the disruption of oil production has led to a significant decline in export revenues, estimated at \$7 million per day. Publicized allowances became more strained as a consequence, and approaches to crucial services like healthcare and education are restricted. In different households, the responsibility of providing food is unequally beared by women, increasing their defenselessness to poverty and exploitation

### **Severe Flooding and Climate shocks**

In addition to conflict and displacement, **severe flooding** is another major threat facing South Sudan. Overflowing rivers in the **Sudd Wetlands** have troubled crops, caused outbursts of livestock diseases like **foot and mouth disease**, **CBP** (Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumia, a serious lung disease in cattle), and **botulism** from impure water and decaying vegetation and carcasses. According to [UNICEF South Sudan](#), those floods have led to widespread **malnutrition among women and children**, as farming is disrupted and food becomes scarce. Access to healthcare is insufficient while vulnerable to diseases such as cholera, malaria, acute respiratory infections, and dysentery spread quickly in overpopulated, unclean shelters. The situation is particularly dangerous for pregnant women who are often cut off from access to maternal services and proper nutrition. In many flooded areas families are forced to escape from their homes and seek shelter in **IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps** or secluded areas, which often face life-threatening shortages of humanitarian aid access, including **clean drinking water**. According to [WASH,\(Water, Sanitation and Hygiene\)](#) guidelines, unsafe water impairs health through disease such as diarrhea, untreated excreta and other neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) like trachoma and schistosomiasis.

## Solutions/ Recommendations

Access to **safe drinking water**, proper **sanitation**, and **hygiene** is necessary to shield the health and dignity of **pregnant and breastfeeding women, children**, yet it remains a major gap in many crisis responses. According to the **U.S. Department of State**, efforts to combat **human trafficking and gender-based violence (GBV)** in South Sudan must include the **investigation and prosecution** of traffickers, as well as the creation of effective **victim identification and referral systems** in partnership with international organizations and civil society. These processes, developed in cooperation with international organizations and civil society, will aid in **dismissing organized crime networks** and ensuring **justice for survivors**. Equally significant is **training for law enforcement officers and social workers** to better identify indications of trafficking, especially among vulnerable groups like **women, children, refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons (IDPs)**s. Such training would reduce wrongful arrests and ensure cases are better investigated and evidence based.

When floods occur, animals are exposed to diseases and the best way to tackle this problem is through **immunization of animals**. [Veterinarians Without Borders](#) provides a solution in which local livestock keepers are trained in basic animal healthcare such as **disease recognition, vaccination and biosecurity practices**. This improves both animal welfare and community resilience by providing information and awareness to insufficiently funded communities on how to safeguard their animals during and after floods. Furthermore, organizations such as the [Sustainable Agrifood Systems Approach for Sudan \(SASAS\)](#) works with women to prepare and safeguard growing seasons as well as working towards acquiring skills and knowledge on agricultural production, irrigation techniques and pest control.

## Conclusion

The famine crisis in South Sudan is compelled by factors such as conflict, economic crisis, and climate-related disasters like flooding. **Women and children are more immensely impacted**, encountering health challenges and negligence of their human rights. However, through combined methods that incorporate access to clean water, **gender-sensitive** humanitarian efforts, and agricultural resilience, there is an extent of positivity for lasting recovery. Improving local capabilities, protecting rights, and ensuring fair aid distribution

locally and globally are crucial for uplifting South Sudan's most at-risk groups from crisis to sustained stability.

***“Conflict doesn't just displace people—it disrupts food systems, deepens malnutrition, and exposes women and children to unimaginable risks.”***

#### **South Sudan: Hunger & Protection Snapshot:**

- **7.7 million people face acute food insecurity**
- **2.4 million children at risk of malnutrition**
- **Ongoing violence in Upper Nile & Jonglei continues to displace thousands**
- **Displacement linked to maternal health decline and increased sexual exploitation**

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