



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# SOUTH SUDAN

The impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods

DIEM-Impact report  
January 2024



the  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is a linear space over  $\mathbb{R}$  with the usual addition and scalar multiplication. The inner product is defined by

$$(x, y) = x_1 y_1 + x_2 y_2 + \dots + x_n y_n \quad (1)$$

where  $x = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$  and  $y = (y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n)$  are vectors in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .

The norm of a vector  $x$  is defined by

$$\|x\| = \sqrt{(x, x)} = \sqrt{x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \dots + x_n^2} \quad (2)$$

The distance between two vectors  $x$  and  $y$  is defined by

$$d(x, y) = \|x - y\| = \sqrt{(x - y, x - y)} \quad (3)$$

The angle between two vectors  $x$  and  $y$  is defined by

$$\cos \theta = \frac{(x, y)}{\|x\| \|y\|} \quad (4)$$

The orthogonal projection of a vector  $x$  onto a vector  $y$  is defined by

$$\text{proj}_y x = \frac{(x, y)}{(y, y)} y \quad (5)$$

The orthogonal distance from a vector  $x$  to a vector  $y$  is defined by

$$d(x, y) = \|x - \text{proj}_y x\| \quad (6)$$

The orthogonal distance from a vector  $x$  to a subspace  $S$  is defined by

$$d(x, S) = \inf_{y \in S} \|x - y\| \quad (7)$$

The orthogonal distance from a point  $x$  to a line  $L$  is defined by

$$d(x, L) = \inf_{y \in L} \|x - y\| \quad (8)$$

The orthogonal distance from a point  $x$  to a plane  $P$  is defined by

$$d(x, P) = \inf_{y \in P} \|x - y\| \quad (9)$$

The orthogonal distance from a point  $x$  to a hyperplane  $H$  is defined by

$$d(x, H) = \inf_{y \in H} \|x - y\| \quad (10)$$

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## REQUIRED CITATION

FAO. 2024. *South Sudan: The impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods – DIEM-Impact report, January 2024*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9717en>

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ISBN 978-92-5-138591-3

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## Abbreviations

<b>CSRF</b>	Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility
<b>DIEM</b>	Data in Emergencies Information System
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>IDP</b>	internally displaced persons
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>R-ARCSS</b>	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
<b>SGBV</b>	sexual and gender-based violence
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Fund
<b>UNMISS</b>	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme



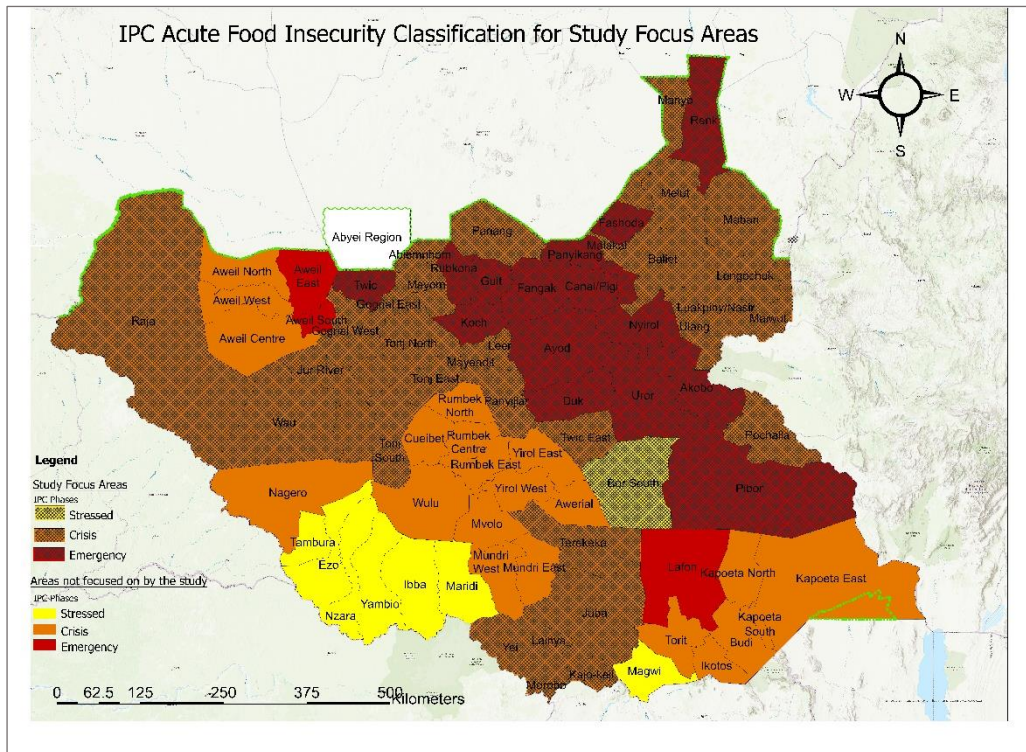
# Country overview

## General context

Food insecurity in South Sudan is driven by cascading shocks including conflict and insecurity, macro-economic crisis caused by the depreciation of the local currency, high inflation, conflict in the Sudan, climatic shocks (floods and dry spells), climate- and conflict-induced population displacement, persistent low agricultural production levels, and the cumulative effects of prolonged years of asset depletion that continue to erode the coping capacities of households and the loss of livelihoods.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) conducted in September and October 2023, an estimated 5.83 million people (46 percent of the population) were expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse acute food insecurity between September and November 2023, and 35 000 people were likely to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) acute food insecurity. Of those classified in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), an estimated 14 000 are South Sudanese returnees who fled the ongoing conflict in the Sudan. The number of people classified as acutely food insecure (IPC Phase 3 and above) is likely to increase to 7.1 million (56 percent of the population) during the April to July 2024 lean season (IPC, 2023). As conflict is a key driver, it is important to analyse how it contributes to food insecurity with the objective of developing area-based strategies to enable more effective and impactful interventions.

Figure 1. Current and projected acute food insecurity situation for the study focus areas, September 2023–July 2024



Source: Adapted from IPC. 2023. *South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis, September 2023–July 2024*. Rome. [https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC\\_South\\_Sudan\\_Acute\\_Food\\_Insecurity\\_Malnutrition\\_Sep2023\\_July2024\\_report.pdf](https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_South_Sudan_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Malnutrition_Sep2023_July2024_report.pdf)

Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

FAO conducted a conflict assessment in Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal states, and in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. The assessment was conducted to generate policy and conflict-sensitive programming recommendations to inform decision-making, and strengthen resilience to shocks and stresses in a conflict and gender sensitive way.

## Conflict context

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in September 2018, provided a broad framework for a power sharing arrangement under a new transitional government of national unity that was eventually formed in February 2020. Despite these developments, fragility in South Sudan has persisted on account of the slow implementation of the R-ARCSS (RJMEC, 2023), weak links between national and sub-national level peacebuilding infrastructure, weak economic performance, poor governance, social frictions compounded by the existence of non-state armed actors, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). All these factors combined raise key safety and security concerns while exacerbating food insecurity and malnutrition.

Social cohesion and economic inclusiveness are undermined by the lack of basic freedoms and other human rights violations, lack of trust in political and security institutions, a drop in oil prices, policy ineffectiveness and uncertainty about the

future – especially among young men and women whose potential remains high but with limited opportunities for socio-economic development. Following the signing of the peace agreement in 2018, armed conflict and associated fatalities declined, but this decline has been tainted by the persistence of localized conflict across many states – usually involving cattle rustling, retaliatory killings and other intercommunal motivated conflict. The 2018 R-ARCSS has had little impact on the levels of SGBV, which continues unabated, while conflict-induced displacement has increased. These incidences could worsen as the country draws closer to the 2024 presidential election – originally scheduled for 2022.

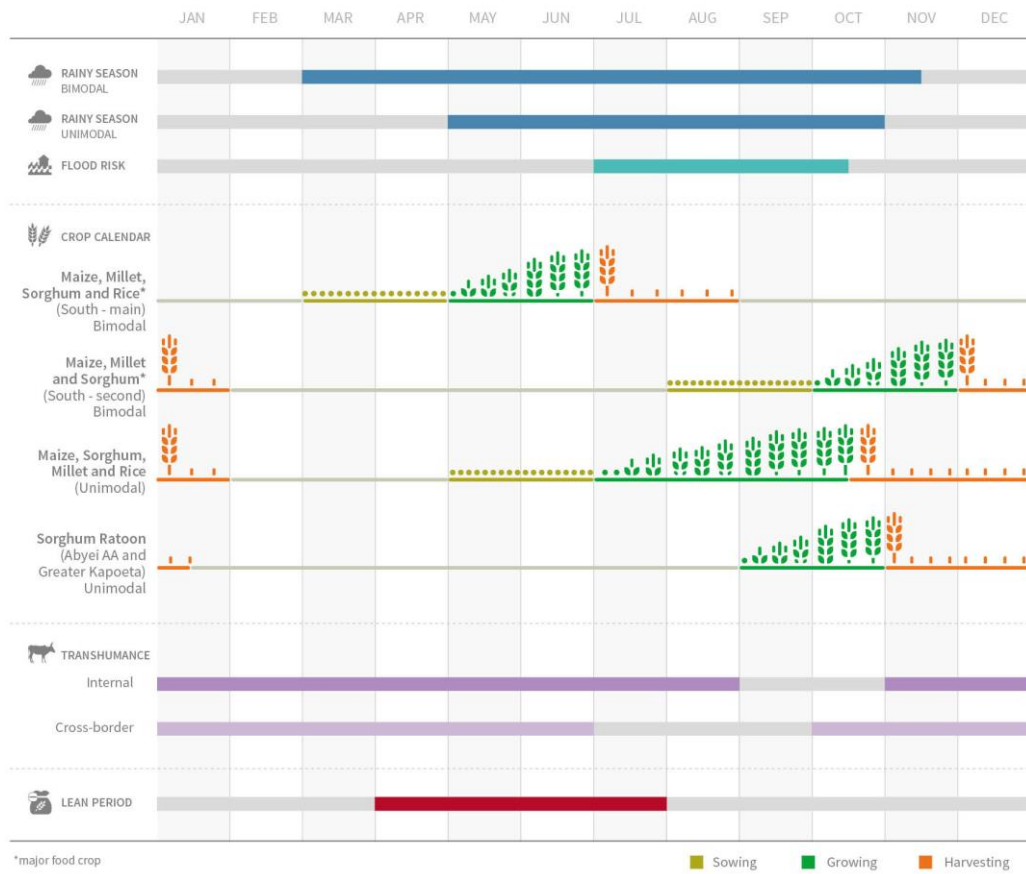
Climate driven displacement remains one of the country's major concerns with both flooding and droughts causing unprecedented movement within the country. Resource based and intercommunal conflicts are common occurrences. Conflict over natural resources has been attributed to disputes over land boundary demarcations, destruction of crops by livestock, and competition for water and pasture resulting from livestock concentration in certain areas. Intercommunal conflict is characterized by interclan rivalries, and cattle raids across communities and borders. The ongoing conflict is having serious implications on the country's food production, nutrition and livelihoods leading to an increased number of food insecure and malnourished households.

Conflict, coupled with climatic shocks, has resulted in massive internal and external displacement. As of April 2023, 2 027 331 South Sudanese were internally displaced, with returnees totalling approximately 2 335 604 people. This figure includes 1 696 633 (73 percent) people previously displaced within South Sudan that returned to their original homes (as of April 2023) and 638 971 (27 percent) who returned to their homes from abroad (IOM, 2023a). The main causes of displacement were political conflict and intercommunal clashes, followed by natural disasters (mainly floods) (IOM, 2023a). The influx of returnees and refugees also spiked due to the ongoing conflict in the Sudan that commenced on 15 April 2023.

### **South Sudan seasonal trends**

Most of South Sudan is unimodal. The bimodal areas comprise the greater Equatoria region – which includes Western, Central and Eastern Equatoria states (ADBG, 2013). Land preparation and planting – primarily undertaken by women – takes place before the rains start. In the unimodal areas, the rainy season lasts from May to October with the harvest occurring from November to January. In bimodal areas, the rains occur from March to November, and the first harvest is between July and August. During the second season, the harvest takes place between December and January (Figure 2).

Figure 2. South Sudan agricultural calendar



Source: FAO. 2023. GIEWS Country Briefs: South Sudan. In: FAO, 23 March 2023. Rome. [Cited 2 January 2024]. <https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=SSD&lang=en>

## Transhumance

Livestock move from wet season grazing areas (homesteads) to dry season grazing areas (along rivers, streams, swamps, or where there's pasture and water) between November and January, and return to the wet season grazing areas (homesteads) between April and May. Cross border migration occurs between January and February. The peak period for internal livestock migration to the dry grazing areas is in November, and to the wet grazing areas in May.

Additionally, the peak of kidding, calving and milk production is during the rainy season from July to August (Table 1). Outbreaks and spread of pests and diseases occur during the rainy season. The peak period for transhumance is during the lean/dry season due to scarcity of grazing areas and water. This period is characterized by intensified conflict because of the competition over grazing areas and water. Herder-farmer conflict increases as pastoralists search for grazing areas and trespass on farms breeding conflict.

Table 1. South Sudan transhumance calendar

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Internal migration												
Homestead to lowland areas												
Return to homesteads												
Livestock around homesteads												
Cross border migration (pastoralists from the Sudan)												
Peak internal migration period												
Peak calving, kidding and milk production												
Peak pest and disease outbreak (rainy season)												
Intensified competition for water and pasture												
Increased farmer-herder conflict												

Source: FAO. 2024. South Sudan: The impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods – DIEM-Impact report, January 2024. Rome.

# DIEM-Impact assessment

## Objectives

The overall objective of the DIEM-Impact assessment was to identify and analyse the causes and drivers of conflict, and their impacts on food security and livelihoods. Furthermore, the study identified opportunities for conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive programming for improved resilience to shocks and threats.

The specific objectives included:

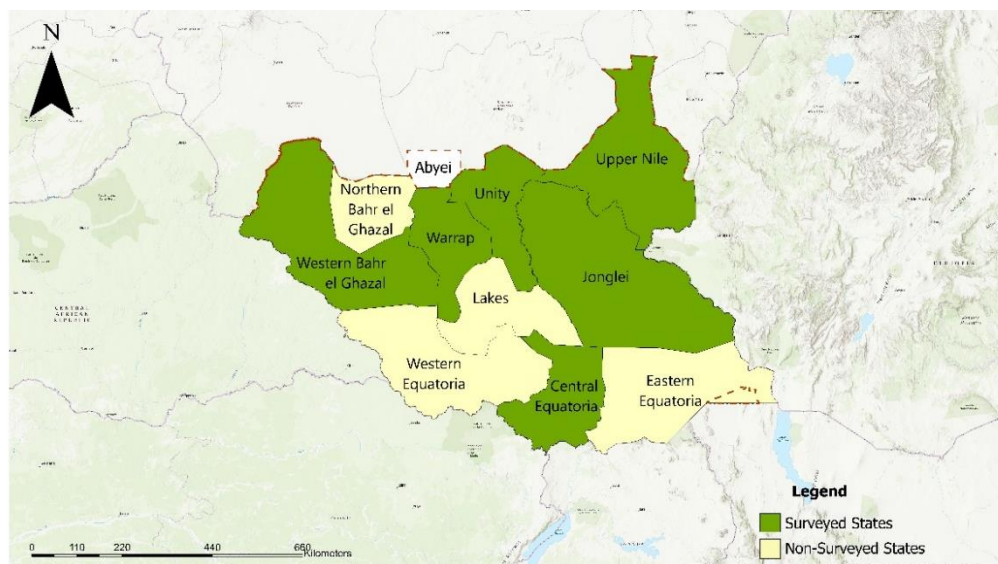
- To establish the key causes and drivers of conflict-induced food insecurity in Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal states, and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area.
- To understand the impact of conflict on agricultural livelihoods.
- To understand how social and gender norms drive conflict and exacerbate food insecurity.
- To identify the priority needs of the targeted communities.
- To enlist community and locally generated recommendations on conflict prevention and management, and provide resilience building approaches to mitigate the adverse effects of conflict on food security livelihoods.

## Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research approaches. This enabled an understanding of experiences, attitudes, behaviours and interactions in relation to conflict and food insecurity, and the impact of floods in locations where they have been prevalent.

The study covered six of South Sudan's ten states and one administrative area. The states included Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal, and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (Figure 3). Within these states, study locations were selected based on an agreed upon set of criteria that included accessibility, and the magnitude and severity of conflict in comparison to other locations. These locations were then qualified as conflict hotspots. The selection of respondents was guided by gender considerations and the inclusion of often marginalized groups. The marginalized groups were identified during the training of enumerators and were comprised of women, the elderly and disabled. Deliberate measures were taken to include these groups while mobilizing respondents.

Figure 3. Conflict assessment survey coverage map



Source: FAO. 2024. *South Sudan: The impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods – DIEM-Impact report, January 2024*. Rome.

Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Data collection tools were reviewed during the enumerators’ training and pre-tests informed relevant adjustments at the different locations. Data collection took place between 26 September and 7 October 2023 through face-to-face key informant interviews, participatory rapid appraisal tools – conflict actor map/Venn diagram, seasonal calendar, natural resource mapping, livelihood analysis/gender daily calendar – and focus group discussions. At least 42 focus group discussions were held with women, youth and men separately. In some instances, all three groups were interviewed together and included those in which participatory methodologies were applied. Forty-nine key informant interviews were conducted across the states. Nine teams constituting 3–4 people per team collected data from the study locations. The focus group discussion participants included 103 male and 53 female respondents in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area; 42 male and 25 female respondents in Warrap; 26 male and 4 female respondents in Central Equatoria; 38 male and 36 female respondents in Western Bahr el Ghazal; 47 male and 22 female respondents in Unity; and 34 male and 26 female respondents in Upper Nile. There was a total of 456 focus group discussion participants (290 males and 166 females). A breakdown of the focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and the composition of the enumerators and assessment team are provided in the annexes of this report.

## Challenges

Due to insecurity, certain locations could not be reached by the assessment team. However, virtual interviews were conducted to collect and verify the information provided by respondents located outside of the targeted locations at the time. In some states, the interview transcripts were quite brief, raising concerns about the possibility of some information being left out.

## Gaps in research

The study focused on identifying the causes and drivers of conflict, and understanding how they impact food security and livelihoods from the respondents' perspectives. Although political dynamics play a huge role in shaping food systems, this report does not dive into this area. Related sensitivities were observed throughout the data collection process leaving a gap that should be filled through more in-depth studies on the subject matter.

# Key findings from the study

## National-level conflict dynamics

The national-level conflict dynamics in South Sudan reflect local-level dynamics and other macro-level exacerbating factors. This section provides an overview of the respondents' concerns about the persistence of factors behind the country's fragility. The respondents cited issues that span several states, impact national level peace and security, and link to the food security situation.

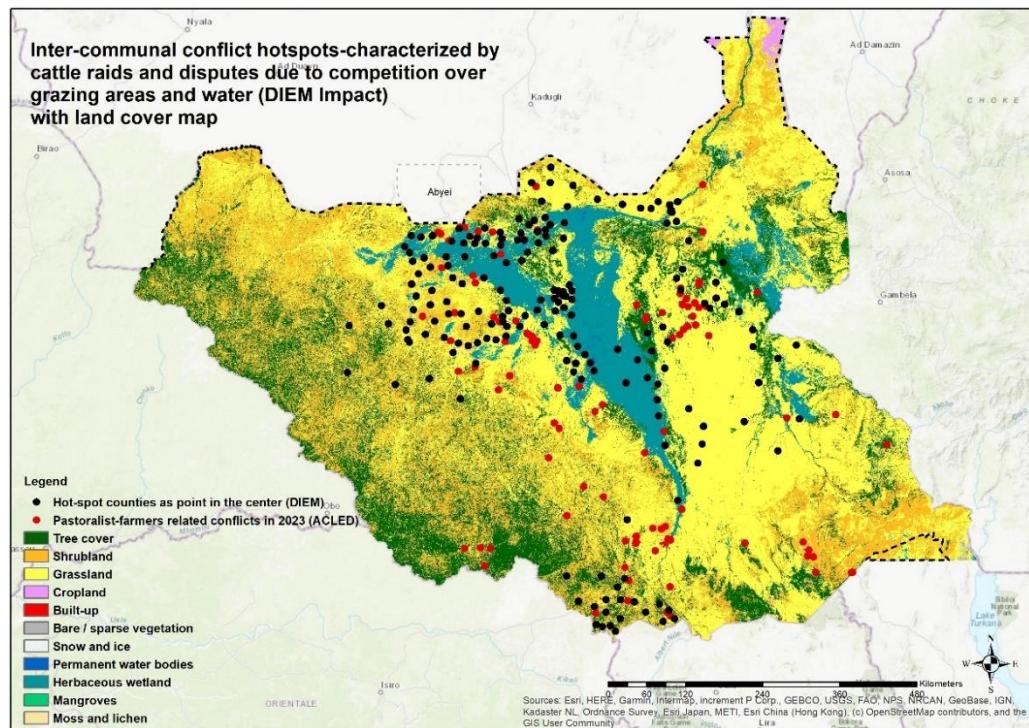
## Political dynamics

At the time of the study, respondents reported a significant level of tension among different political groups driven by mistrust and perceptions of exclusion from governance processes, among others. This was said to be sustaining power struggles – an issue that continues to define the country's political landscape and governance challenges. Local-level conflict was also said to have an influence on higher-level political divisions, especially along ethnic divides.

## Intercommunal conflict

Nearly all of the states in South Sudan were said to be affected by disputes and conflicts between and among communities. These were attributed to historical rivalries driven by ethnic feuds, contention over access to natural resources and unaddressed legacies of political conflict, among others. Specific examples of conflict and its role in the worsening food security situation were reported in the state-level conflict analysis.

Figure 4. Intercommunal conflict hotspots characterized by cattle raids and disputes



Source: FAO. 2024. *South Sudan: The impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods – DIEM-Impact report, January 2024*. Rome.

Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

### Proliferation of firearms

One of the identified destabilizing factors relates to the increase in flow and illicit use of firearms by civilian populations. This is an issue that has sustained both intercommunal and political conflict in the country with effects spilling across borders. Key informants at national level expressed concern over the variance in perspectives regarding the possession and use of firearms. They cited the often used argument by proponents that the defence and protection of themselves, their communities, livestock and other possessions requires the possession of weapons. However, complainants are those who bear the brunt of weapon-related violence. Gun violence has led to displacement, loss of lives and fear, thereby halting, and/or limiting engagement in both crop and livestock production.

### Forced displacement

Forced displacement is characterized by internal displacement because of floods in some states – mainly parts of Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Warrap – and intercommunal conflict, especially over access to natural resources. The influx of refugees, particularly from the Sudan, and return and reintegration are some of the key challenges faced across the country. The role of forced displacement in exacerbating conflict drivers through land conflict, competition for water and pasture – especially among pastoralists – and contention over access to humanitarian assistance – especially between refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities – remains a challenge.

### Economic recession

Currency depreciation, high inflation and an increase in commodity prices, coupled with high levels of unemployment especially among young men and women, have heightened grievances at local and national levels. These – combined with other exacerbating factors like floods, long dry spells and loss of livelihoods – are contributing factors to ongoing political and resource-based conflict and insecurity through increased competition, and the adoption of negative coping mechanisms, among others.

### Upcoming elections

Elections in South Sudan were initially scheduled for 2022 but the transition period was extended for two years until late 2024. Some respondents were unsure about the country's readiness for the upcoming elections. They cited divisions across ethnic lines and the actions of non-state armed actors as factors that could derail both preparation and participation in the electoral process.

### Natural disaster

Since 2017, flooding and its impacts in South Sudan have been unprecedented, with over 2 million people estimated to have been affected so far. The most devastating impacts of the floods were experienced in 2021 when 856 000 people were affected (UNDP, 2023), and over 1 million people were affected in 2022 (OCHA, 2022). The country's response mechanisms have been overstretched and humanitarian support is inadequate to meet the overwhelming needs that not only relate to floods but other shocks, like drought. These shocks have hampered people's capacity to cope since both crop and animal production, and productivity have been grossly affected. Floods and drought have played a key role in driving natural resource-based conflict and food insecurity in South Sudan with humanitarian response constrained by conflict and insecurity.

For more in-depth area-based analysis of the nexus between conflict and food security, subnational-level interviews were conducted. The state-level sections below detail the drivers of conflict, and their impact on food security and livelihoods – acknowledging the links between localized conflict and national-level political, economic and social dynamics.

# Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area

## Background

Most households in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area are predominantly pastoralist, while others engage in agropastoralism, crop farming, fisheries and petty trade to meet their food needs and to generate income. The types of livestock kept are mainly cattle, goats and poultry, while the main crops cultivated include sorghum, groundnuts, maize, beans, okra and vegetables.

The nature of conflict in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area is intercommunal – pitting clans and ethnic groups against each other – especially within Jonglei, and between Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area communities. The conflict is mainly driven by poverty as youth have limited income generating opportunities leaving them vulnerable and susceptible to engaging in crime. Cultural practices, including marriage ceremonies, drive raids for the acquisition of livestock to be used as a bride price or dowry. In communities where age sets<sup>1</sup> play a key role in shaping power dynamics, young men are identified as the most powerful actors in fuelling conflict – with elders and women supporting raids through celebrations. Every successful raid is considered a conquest that comes with prestige and social status. Cattle raids are characterized by lootings, killings, and the abduction of women and children igniting cycles of retaliatory attacks by one community against another. They lead to subsequent raids that are equally destructive and involve killings, looting and, in some cases, the burning of farms.

Raids are more intense during periods when traditional ceremonies are taking place and marriage dowries are needed. Additionally, when a girl is impregnated, or in cases of elopement, raids are conducted to acquire cattle to compensate the family, or elders of the involved parties settle the matter amicably through dialogue or compensatory agreements. During the lean/dry season, when pastoralists migrate with their livestock to other areas in search of grazing land and water for their animals, competition with other communities over inadequate resources results in overcrowding and congestion, creating conditions for conflict through raids and cattle thefts. Additionally, failure to follow migratory routes by pastoralists leads to farm destruction resulting in conflict between herders and farmers.

Pibor County was severely affected by the 2021 and 2022 floods that resulted in lost lives and destruction of property leaving hundreds of households displaced and destitute as their livelihood assets were destroyed. Over time, Jonglei State, including the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, has had many households facing starvation and high malnutrition rates among children. Huge food consumption gaps persist, with 11 000 people expected to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) and facing starvation

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<sup>1</sup> Age sets are social groupings divided by age where each group plays a certain role in the community. In this context, male youth belong to the same age set whose role is to protect the community.

between December 2023 and March 2024 in various counties in Jonglei State (IPC, 2023). Most of these households continue to be vulnerable as they have not fully recovered from the effects of the floods and are still residing in IDP camps.

The current shocks faced in Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area include conflict; floods in Duk, Fangak and Twic East counties; dry spells in Pibor and Nyirol counties; and crop and livestock pests and diseases. Additionally, the poverty situation in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, and most of Jonglei State, is alarming coupled with the fact that most households have not recovered from the 2021/22 floods where they lost all their assets. Survey respondents mentioned that most youth do not have income generating livelihoods, which renders them vulnerable to engaging in criminal activities such as cattle raids, killings, rape, theft, and the abduction of women and children.

The majority of IDPs in Jonglei have been displaced by floods, followed by conflict and intercommunal clashes. By April 2023, there were 408 337 IDPs within Jonglei state. Of these, 133 414 people were displaced between January and April 2023 alone. The majority of the IDPs were in Canal Pigi (104 774), Bor South (89 493), Fangak (60 496) and Nyirol (44 600) counties (IOM, 2023a). About 243 463 returnees were recorded in Jonglei by the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Data Tracking Matrix as of April 2023. This included 189 028 people (78 percent) who had been previously displaced within the country while 54 435 (22 percent) returned from abroad. A continuous influx of returnees was reported during data collection.

The intercommunal attack against communities in Gumuruk, Lekuangle and Vertet in 2022 forced most of the residents to flee to Pibor County. Some of them did not return to their homes due to fear of cyclical violence and were living as IDPs within Pibor town at the time of the study.

## Types, causes and drivers of conflict

The main drivers of conflict in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area are intercommunal and ethnic issues that arise between communities, mainly driven by poverty, cultural beliefs and traditional age-set systems.

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*"The possession of arms by civilians remains a key driver of conflict and exacerbates its impacts by frustrating peace efforts."*

Male key informant in Bor Central

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### Cattle raids

During marriage ceremonies, elopement or when minors become pregnant, raids are conducted either to acquire livestock for bride payments or to compensate the aggrieved girl's family in the case of elopement or early pregnancy. The age-set system places power in the hands of young men who are normally celebrated after successful raids. These raids are followed with retaliatory attacks from the affected community/clan and

retaliation leads to more killing, looting and livestock theft. The possession of arms, by young men especially, sustains this conflict by facilitating cattle raids, killing and other criminal activities.

### Conflict between farmers and herders

Disputes and conflicts between farmers and herders are frequent when pastoralists move with their livestock through undesignated migratory routes destroying crops and farms, resulting in violent conflict and lost lives.

### Conflict in the fisheries sector

Fishing is conducted along the River Nile in Jonglei State by different communities. Conflict between fisherfolk is not common in Jonglei, apart from the tensions and disputes between female traders and male fisherfolk.

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*“The fishermen dock their boats here, blocking us from accessing the river to wash our fish.”*

Female fish trader in Bor

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### Conflict and humanitarian assistance

In communities where humanitarian assistance was perceived to have been unfairly distributed, disputes have occurred. Looting of humanitarian assistance was reported in Bor Central, for example, where assistance stored for distribution was stolen. Cases of road ambushes on humanitarian convoys and workers, and looting of humanitarian assistance in transit have been on the rise.

### Conflict hotspots

The conflict hotspots reported in greater Jonglei include Akobo, Bor South, Duk, Twic East and Uror counties. In Pibor County, the areas most affected by conflict in terms of frequency and impact are: Gumuruk, Lekuangole, Pibor, Pochalla and Vertet counties. Additionally, conflict in Jonglei has been linked to conflict in Central Equatoria State as communities from Bor moved to Mangalla and Rokon in Juba State, Kajo Keji, and other parts of Central Equatoria. This was either due to displacement caused by the 2021/22 floods or intercommunal conflict, with some moving with their livestock to settle in Central Equatoria. Some communities settled in IDP camps in Mangalla, while those migrating with livestock moved to Juba and Kajo Keji causing destruction of farms along the way and fuelling farmer-herder conflict. Communities from Jonglei have not been welcomed by host communities in Central Equatoria State, leading to conflict and continued tensions between these host communities and IDPs.

Through remote sensing, FAO identified areas of Jonglei and Central Equatoria as the main conflict hotspots associated with crop lands. It also showed a clear overlap between IDP settlement areas and conflict hotspot areas (FAO, forthcoming). In 2023, Pochalla County, the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, was a hotspot of political conflict between

the South Sudan People's Defence Forces – formerly the Sudan People's Liberation Army – and armed youth. Fighting broke out in September 2023, and tensions remain high as the grievances behind the conflict are yet to be addressed, leaving the possibility of the recurrence of violence. According to the remote sensing assessment, the conflict hotspots are areas where livestock is concentrated the most.

### **Main conflict and peace actors**

In Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, the main actors in the conflict are young men from the different communities who conduct raids against each other – sparking retaliatory attacks. In some instances, the elders and chiefs have been accused of mobilizing young men to organize raids and cattle thefts. Additionally, politicians have been accused of being the main players in the raids as they own livestock. For example, respondents reported a raid – allegedly conducted on behalf of a politician and took place prior to data collection – that involved the theft of about 40 000 heads of cattle which were moved to Central Equatoria.

Government and religious institutions were said to have put some effort into making peace agreements to allow for the return of stolen livestock and children – this is yet to bear fruit. Key examples include the Pieri peace agreement signed in March 2023 (Conference Committee Representatives, 2021) that aimed to forge peace between communities in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area; and the 2020 Peace Initiative (UNMISS, 2021) – spearheaded by religious leaders that was set up to foster dialogue between communities. The Payam administration, elders and women have also made efforts to address conflict through dialogue.

### **Impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods**

Respondents reported that there has been increased cases of insecurity, rape of women and girls, and violent attacks that have resulted in deaths. These occurrences have led to fear, preventing people – especially women – from accessing farms, including larger farms located far from their homesteads. The reduction in farming activities has negatively impacted production capacity, income generation and food security. The destruction of crops by livestock not only reduces productivity in farms as crops are destroyed, but also discourages farmers from engaging in cropping activities due to uncompensated damage and loss. Conflict has also disrupted humanitarian activities including distribution of farm inputs, which affect subsequent agricultural production.

Cattle raids, which are normally conducted by male youth, in addition to conflict between herders and farmers, have led to low productivity in the livestock sector due to the disruption of typical livestock grazing, watering and loss of livestock through raids and theft. As atypical migration is heightened by conflict, the risk of livestock pests and diseases spreading increases at a time when veterinary services cannot be accessed. This negatively impacts livestock production and reproduction (calving and kidding) due to deterioration in the health of animals constraining food availability at household level. Increased malnutrition rates among lactating women and children under five are

heightened during conflict because of the unavailability of sufficient milk and reduced dietary diversity.

Although conflict between fisherfolk and fish traders is not common in Jonglei, minor tensions and disputes affect the productive capacity of female traders when preservation and trading operations are disrupted reducing income.

With the loss of lives, loss of livestock and disrupted livelihood activities – including farming, fishing, livestock rearing, charcoal burning, grass cutting and trade – incomes have declined eroding the purchasing power of households, and limiting access to food and essential commodities.

Cases of SGBV against women and girls in forests have interfered with their ability to generate income and access food from forest resources, including the collection of wild food, grass cutting, charcoal burning and other income generating activities from forest products.

Movement challenges have been apparent due to cases of ambushes, attacks and killings. These affect the distribution of humanitarian assistance and trade as the supply of food and non-food commodities is disrupted. Increased incidences of SGBV against women and girls have been reported during dry seasons because they must move long distances to fetch water for domestic use. Increased livestock trekking distances and congestion of livestock along water points have also been reported to breed conflict among pastoralists as they compete over water and grazing areas.

Displacement has been one of the main impacts of the ongoing conflict and an unknown number of returnees from the Sudan was reported in Taragok IDP camp. Due to displacement by conflict and floods, some have permanently left their homes to settle in new places or IDP camps. One key informant in Jonglei State reported that some communities from Jonglei have settled in Mangalla (Central Equatoria), and IDPs have settled in Akobo, Baidit, Bor stadium, Kodait, Malek (Bor South) and Taragok. Destruction of assets and property has been another repercussion of conflict in addition to suspended school attendance due to insecurity.

### **Impact of floods on conflict dynamics, food security and livelihoods**

The 2021/22 flooding mainly affected Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area leading to massive displacement, fatalities, loss of property, destruction of farmland and loss of livestock. The 2023 floods were not significant in most parts, though some areas such as Duk, Twic East, parts of Ayod and parts of Fangak counties were flooded and rendered inaccessible. Farmland and rangeland were covered with water leading to forced displacement. In some cases, the flood waters were said to have been infested with dangerous snakes. The population in the flooded areas could not access their farms and growing crops were damaged, reducing production and income prospects.

Prolonged dry spells were reported in most parts of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, posing access challenges to water, farming and grazing land.

According to the communities, apart from loss of livestock through mortality, past flooding has destroyed grazing areas and displaced pastoralists who moved to higher ground and other areas. Relocation often results in conflict over grazing land and watering spots. This affects livestock production and productivity, reduces participation in livestock trading, and negatively impacts livestock income. Additionally, floods pose a high risk in the outbreak and spread of livestock pests and diseases which can result in livestock death or affect the health of the animal – both of which lead to decreased production. Pastoralists in Pibor that experience dry spells are likely to migrate to other areas in search of pastures and water. This results in more conflict between the herders and farmers, and among pastoralists due to competition for pasture and water.

Floods limit fish-trade opportunities as market access becomes a challenge. As roads become impassable, buyers are unable to reach fisherfolk and buy their surplus.

Respondents associated floods with damage and loss of farmland, crops and livestock. Respondent IDPs have not engaged in farming activities and purely rely on humanitarian assistance. For example, in Taragok IDP camp, IDPs from Duk and Twic East mentioned that they have faced challenges accessing land owned by host communities. All these factors limit food availability at household level. Destruction of roads and markets restricts trade, food assistance distribution, and physical access to food and non-food supplies from markets limiting access to food. During the assessment, some flooded areas of Duk and Twic East could only be accessed with canoes as they were submerged, constraining school attendance as schools were either covered with water or closed.

Other impacts of the floods include displacement, with some communities facing long-term displacement in IDP camps – people from Duk and Twic counties in Jonglei State, or communities displaced by the 2021/22 floods from Bor County who settled in Mangalla Payam in Terekeka County, Central Equatoria State, for example. The long-term abandonment of original homes predisposes IDPs, especially those not integrated into host communities, to internal conflict, limited or no livelihood options and food insecurity.

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*“I cannot go back home. I lost everything through floods. Livestock. House. Farmland. Everything. What am I going back to and where will I start from?”*

Female respondent in Twic East, Taragok IDP camp

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# Central Equatoria State

## Background

Households in Central Equatoria mainly practice crop farming, agropastoralism, pastoralism and fishing. Other livelihood activities include formal employment and casual labour in Juba. The main crops cultivated include sorghum, maize and ground nuts.

The reported types of conflict in the state included: political conflict, resource-based conflict, conflict between IDPs and host communities, water-related conflict and farmer-herder conflict. In Kajo Keji, Lainya, Morobo and Yei, the presence of non-state armed actors was said to be causing fear and impeding the physical movement of the communities. Cases of ambushes, killings and other criminal activities were reported to be on the rise.

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*“There has been so much insecurity. Recently, there was an ambush on Lainya-Yei Road where two drivers were killed and their vehicle was looted. I understand that when FAO needs to implement programmes in Kajo Keji, they have to pass through Uganda or fly rather than use roads considered to be insecure, which causes delays in response.”*

Male key informant in Juba

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Communities displaced by 2021/22 floods in Jonglei, and those displaced by intercommunal conflict, moved to Central Equatoria, settling in Mangalla IDP camp while some moved to other locations with their livestock in search of grazing areas. The influx of pastoralists into Central Equatoria, allegedly from Western Equatoria, was reportedly fuelling conflict among pastoralists in Rokon (Juba), due to the concentration of cattle forcing competition for water and grazing areas. Farmer-herder conflict was reported in Nyori (Juba) as livestock continued to destroy farms during migration.

Conflict between herders and farmers is rampant during migration especially in the lean/dry season, as pastoralists have been blamed for not using the designated migratory corridors, causing havoc and destroying farms. Violent clashes, retaliatory attacks and lost lives are some of the reported adverse effects that follow such intrusions. Respondents feared that a resurgence of retaliatory attacks was likely to happen in Central Equatoria, in retaliation for the cattle raided from Jonglei in 2023. Close monitoring of the situation was recommended by respondents.

The settlement of IDP communities in Mangalla was said to have raised tension with host communities as they were not welcomed nor integrated. Additionally, disputes arose between IDPs of different ethnic groups due to historical differences that have exacerbated because of competition for limited humanitarian assistance.

As of April 2023, about 301 538 people were internally displaced in Central Equatoria, with the majority in Juba (162 654) and Yei (61 199) counties (IOM, 2023a). Most IDPs in

Central Equatoria were displaced by conflict followed by natural disasters. For example, communities from Twic East (Jonglei) were displaced by floods and are currently settled in Mangalla IDP camp. By April 2023, returnees totalled about 233 420, including 105 124 (45 percent) returnees from South Sudan who had been previously displaced from within the country, and 128 298 (55 percent) from abroad, most of whom settled in Yei County (77 472) (IOM, 2023b).

Other than conflict, drought was reported as another shock that has affected crop production, and the availability of pasture and water.

## Types, causes and drivers of conflict

### Conflict between farmers and herders

The most common type of conflict in Central Equatoria is farmer herder conflict driven by livestock migration especially in Kajo Keji and Morobo counties. Since livestock do not follow the traditionally agreed upon migration routes and corridors, they feed on and destroy farms, resulting in clashes involving killings, SGBV targeted at women and girls, lootings and retaliatory attacks.

### Conflict between IDPs and host communities

Some IDPs from Bor County in Jonglei State displaced by the 2021/22 floods and those displaced by conflict settled in Mangalla in Terekeka County, while some of the pastoralists moved to other locations. This has bred disputes and, in some cases, violent clashes between IDPs and host communities over access to land for farming, and competition for pasture and water for livestock. Due to increased competition for scarce resources, host communities are not in favour of the IDPs from Jonglei State settling in Mangalla and have restricted their access to land.

### Actions of non-state armed actors

Political conflict was said to be manifesting through the presence and actions of non-state armed actors who are causing fear, insecurity and engaging in criminal activities. They were also blamed for launching attacks on civilians and humanitarian workers, and for perpetrating SGBV against women and young girls. These armed actors were mainly reported in Kajo Keji, Lainya, Morobo and Yei.

### Conflict over water resources

Competition for water resources between domestic users and livestock keepers is common in Central Equatoria and has reportedly bred disputes between pastoralists and domestic users. Conflict intensifies during the dry season when water points are limited and replenishment levels are below capacity. In such periods, the trekking distances increase, and women and girls are prone to attacks including SGBV as they cover long distances to access water.

### Conflict in the fisheries sector

Disputes also exist between fisherfolk and farmers as fisherfolk are not allowed to access the river in certain demarcated areas along the River Nile in Terekeka County. Such

disputes were reported to have taken place along riverbanks, where demarcation of fishing grounds hampers vegetable farming. Allegations of trespassing have, at times, resulted in violent clashes between the different user groups.

### **Conflict hotspots**

The presence of non-state armed groups in Kajo Keji, Lainya, Morobo and Yei counties makes these locations key hotspots to monitor in terms of access, safety and for the security of communities. The concentration of cattle in Juba's Rokon breeds ground for conflict, where fights are more likely as pastoralists occupy the local community's farmland fuelling competition for grazing areas and water points. Additionally, conflict is common in Mangalla due to the increased number of IDPs from Jonglei State. This exacerbates competition for resources among IDPs, and competition for livelihood options between IDPs and host communities.

### **Main conflict and peace actors**

The main actors of the conflict in Central Equatoria are herders and farmers. Since both pastoralists and farmers are in possession of firearms, pastoralists move with their livestock in search of grazing areas and destroy farms along the way resulting in fighting between the two groups. IDPs and host communities engage in frequent disputes and fights, with criminal activities of non-state armed actors affecting road access by different users and disrupting transport and trade activities.

The structures that exist for conflict management include the Ministry of Peace Building that has been decentralized in the states, the Peace Commission, and religious and community leaders – like chiefs – who normally address local disputes.

### **Impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods**

The massive destruction of farms and crops in Central Equatoria continues to result in huge crop losses, disruption of farming activities and discouragement of farmers from farming, significantly reducing crop production. Such conflicts have hampered distribution of farm inputs from humanitarian agencies affecting production for subsequent seasons.

The loss of livestock during raids reduces the total livestock unit of households and leads to reduced wealth in terms of livestock holding and poverty. Disrupted livestock feeding and watering reduces milk production at household level, and affects livestock reproduction in terms of kidding and calving. As atypical migration is heightened during conflict, the risk of the spread of livestock pests and diseases increases, and the situation is worsened by the lack of veterinary services and inputs. This leads to deteriorated animal health, resulting in little or no milk production and reduced reproduction. The sale of livestock and livestock products is also hampered, negatively affecting income generation from livestock income streams. Men own large heads of cattle while women

own shoats<sup>2</sup> and poultry. Reduced herd size through raids and mortality directly affects men, whose adaptive capacity in terms of asset holding and social status are decreased.

Respondents reported that conflict and insecurity hamper fishing activities affecting food availability, leading to poor dietary diversity at household level resulting in food consumption gaps and poor nutrition outcomes, especially for pregnant and lactating women, and children under five years of age – due to limited food varieties. Income generation from fishing activities by both men and women is also affected as the fish trade is curtailed during major conflict.

Availability of food at household level has been affected by low crop production, reduced livestock and fish production. Furthermore, the income lost when livelihood activities are disrupted constrains financial flow, and limits access to food and essential items. Market access is also affected by conflict and insecurity, in Lainya and Yei, for example. In such instances, households are unable to access different food varieties from the market in such situations. Apart from ambushes, staff killings and looting of humanitarian assistance, conflict and insecurity affected the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance as longer but safer routes are being used to avoid insecure areas. Due to lootings, the quantity of humanitarian supplies reaching the targeted beneficiaries has reduced even when the population has exhausted their livelihood coping strategies and depleted food stocks, contributing to increased vulnerabilities and food insecurity. This mostly affects IDPs who entirely depend on humanitarian food assistance. Furthermore, vulnerable groups including pregnant and lactating women, and children under five are affected in cases of conflict, as food availability and access become limited.

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*“Central Equatoria should be one of the food baskets in South Sudan but it is not because of conflict and insecurity.”*

Wani Julius, Rural Development Program Coordinator, Norwegian People’s Aid

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During the lean season, as seasonal and atypical migration increase in search of pasture and water, conflict and insecurity aggravate cases of SGBV against women and children when their communities are attacked and during long walks to fetch water.

### **Impacts of floods on conflict dynamics, food security and livelihoods**

Flooding has not been a major issue in Central Equatoria except that it caused massive displacement in Jonglei State, resulting in an influx of people into the state causing conflict not only between herders and farmers over the destruction of farms, but also between IDPs and host communities over access to land straining relations with host communities, and hampering crop and livestock production.

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<sup>2</sup> Sheep and goats.

# Western Bahr el Ghazal

## Background

In Western Bahr el Ghazal, the major livelihoods include crop production, fisheries, livestock rearing, apiary and hunting. Some of the crops grown include sorghum, groundnuts, cowpeas and sesame. Cattle, goats and sheep are some of the livestock reared, while poultry includes chicken and ducks.

The main natural resources in the area are grass, bamboo, forests, land, water, rocks, stones and fish. Access to these resources was said to be open to both men and women although they are controlled by men. Due to economic struggles, cutting grass and charcoal burning for sale have become a coping mechanism. Respondents acknowledged that these practices have a negative impact on the environment but that they have become a survival mechanism.

The main non-climatic shock affecting crop production in Wau is destruction caused by livestock movement, especially from November to June which has been reported as the major driver of conflict in the area.

In Western Bahr el Ghazal, low and delayed salaries, poor service delivery, and high costs of living were reported to be fuelling grievances. Disputes between farmers and herders over access to land and the destruction of crops resulting in violent clashes and subsequent displacement were identified as the most common drivers of conflict in the state. In both focus group discussions and key informant interviews, respondents mentioned that resource-based and political conflicts in Wau County are interlinked and therefore difficult to differentiate. Disputes between farmers and cattle keepers who cross into Wau County from Warrap State in search of pasture and water resources were perceived as having political support because of their lack of commitment towards resolution.

The high level of youth unemployment is of concern and has been manifested by an increase in the number of gangs in townships and their role in abetting crime and insecurity. The proliferation of firearms and the selective application of disarmament measures were also said to be escalating tensions between and among communities. Other grievances that are negatively impacting peace dynamics include: political competition ahead of the 2024 elections, the current economic downturn, illegal logging, the removal of community boundary marks, the incitement of hate speech, and the presence of both government armed forces and non-state armed actors in the area.

Wau is host to refugees and returnees who have fled the ongoing armed conflict in the Sudan. Most of them have settled in Payams to the north and south of Wau County and in Raga County. According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 926 households composed of 3 204 individuals (1 777 males and 1 427 females) from the Sudan have registered at Bormadina, El Fau, Raja Town and Timsaha points of entry since 16 April 2023 (IOM, 2023c). As of July 2023, Western Bahr el Ghazal State was host

to 9 868 returnees – 5 942 forced and 3 926 voluntary returnees (IOM, 2023d). The humanitarian situation in these locations was said to be characterized by acute levels of vulnerability, with an increased need for health, water, shelter and food provision services even within households hosting returnees. Some returnees are working on farms and have been given cereals as in-kind payment. Land disputes have not spared them – some of the returnees reported that their land was grabbed when they were in the Sudan thereby aggravating reintegration challenges. This was said to exacerbate disputes in the affected communities.

Most respondents stated that since the closure of the Protection of Civilian sites, there are no IDPs in Wau. However, certain key informants mentioned that Western Bahr el Ghazal State is host to IDPs from Jur River County who have become residents and are adamant about returning home for fear of recurrence of community-level conflict between armed cattle keepers from Warrap State and Jur River youth farmers – this conflict and subsequent displacement occurs annually during cattle migration. This information has been corroborated by IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix which indicates that Western Bahr el Ghazal was hosting 29 288 IDPs as of April 2023 (IOM, 2023e).

A shift in social and gender norms associated with food security and livelihoods was noted, for instance, due to increased exposure of women to risks of insecurity during farming hours. More men were said to be engaged in farming activities as a measure to protect women, while more women are engaged in business activities to supplement household income. Women and children were said to be the most vulnerable to and affected by natural resource-based conflict, with some women taking full responsibility for the household because their spouses have either been killed, deserted the family or are in the army, and have no time to support household-level livelihood activities. Youth were reported to have little or no interest in farming activities due to losses that result from livestock destroying crops. SGBV is reportedly on the rise and women and girls are the main targets. Economic hardships have taken a toll on men and are exacerbating violence at household and community levels.

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*“We need peace so that every woman can go to the farm and forests without fear of being attacked.”*

Female focus group discussion participant in Tonj South

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Management of the above-mentioned conflict is led by the area chiefs under the auspices of customary resolution structures that are responsible for promoting a culture of peace within their communities and with their neighbours. However, some of the leaders mentioned that their work is largely constrained by political interference and a lack of capacity to mobilize conflicting communities for dialogue and implementation of existing peace agreements due to poor coordination. This is especially true between and among states.

## Types, causes, and drivers of conflict

### Land conflicts

Land conflicts in Western Bahr el Ghazal have taken different dimensions – all of which continue to have adverse impacts on food security and livelihoods, as indicated below:

- Land grabbing has been reported as affecting those who returned to their homes from the Sudan and who returned after the closure of the Protection of Civilian sites. Due to non-occupation and non-demarcation of boundaries, some community members claimed land that allegedly belonged to the complainants. In some cases, forceful occupation of land was reported by respondents, pitting powerful individuals against the affected communities bringing livelihood activities to a standstill.
- Land disputes are driven by the contention of access and control of water and pasture resources. Customarily, ownership of both water and pasture resources in the state rests on the communities in which they are located. According to respondents, access to these land-based resources in the state has direct links to land ownership rights. In most cases, non-negotiated access to these resources, especially by livestock keepers, has led to violent clashes during dry seasons.
- Border disputes exist predominantly between Warrap (Gogrial East) and Western Bahr el Ghazal states where the conflict has caused massive displacement. The affected communities have called upon the Commissioner of Lands to hasten its demarcation. Additionally, disputes were reported around the borders with Jur River County as well as with Warrap State where some communities crossed over and claimed ownership of land that should, allegedly, be under the jurisdiction of Wau County. In June 2023, for instance, there was a violent clash in Acot in Jur River County, while in August 2023, there was contention over land ownership in Besselia.

### Cattle movements

Closely linked to the disputes over access to water and pasture are the disputes caused by livestock movement. Whenever long spells of drought diminish water and pasture availability, pastoralists are compelled to move to locations where their animals can access these resources. However, most of these movements are along routes that have not been designated as migration corridors, and a multitude of cattle often destroy crops along the way. The situation has amplified disputes between farmers and pastoralists over the illegal occupation of farmland and the destruction of crops. According to respondents, these movements have been encouraged, allegedly, by politicians who defend it as a mechanism of sustaining livestock production and productivity because some of them own large herds. Much as these conflicts are common occurrences, redress measures remain unyielding. For instance, the recent migration of cattle has ignored the 2016 Marial Bai agreement (UNMISS, 2016) that was meant to regulate relations between farmers and herders in Gogrial, Tonj and Wau to foster peaceful co-existence. The agreement stipulated the time and season for animal movement, and the need for an authorization letter from the chief who was also tasked with showing the corridor where livestock were to graze and assign teams to supervise the movements.

On an annual basis, the Government of South Sudan and partners convene meetings to consult and review the extent of the implementation of this agreement.

The availability of weapons has also hampered the sustainable resolution of farmer-herder disputes and conflicts creating fear among crop farmers who maintain they do not have the might of the gun in comparison to the herders. In response, government security forces have either been non-reactive or slow to respond.

### Cattle raids

Cattle raids were also said to drive disputes and conflict among pastoralists and, in some cases, cause displacement and exacerbate intercommunal conflict. Young men were said to be the perpetrators of raids – with the blessing of traditional elders and women who encourage them through songs of praise. Limited income diversification and sociocultural demands were the reported driving factors.

### Refugee-host community relations

Disputes between refugees from the Sudan and host communities over land use and access to other natural resources like water and wood fuel are on the rise. The relationship between the two was said to be poor. Respondents also expressed uncertainty over the duration of time that the refugees would remain in Western Bahr el Ghazal, citing the challenges of food insecurity, scarce natural resources and related conflict that are already being faced. They further reported unwillingness to contain new challenges brought about by this influx. According to key informants, host communities were concerned about their already overwhelming burdens, while refugees were advocating for increased acceptance and resource sharing.

### Conflict hotspots

The locations mostly affected by natural resource-based conflict in Wau include Baggari Payam, Momoi and Bussere Bomas, Kpaile Payam, Gaitan, Taban and Bazia Bomas, Besselia, Mboro and Khorgana Bomas, Wau South Payam, Agok Boma, Wau North Payam, and Khormalang Boma. Respondents mentioned that despite the above locations being worst hit by conflict, all Western Bahr el Ghazal has been affected and the difference is only in terms of intensity.

### Main conflict and peace actors

Key conflict actors cited in the above-mentioned conflict include pastoralists whose livestock cause destruction to crops, farmers whose crops are destroyed, politicians who support livestock movements along undesignated routes and those involved in land grabbing, and state and non-state armed actors engaged in acts of violence and crime. Young men were said to be fuelling and sustaining the identified conflict through their quest for economic well-being, and fulfilment of sociocultural expectations.

Peace actors include traditional chiefs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, United Nations (UN) agencies and religious institutions,

among others. These actors are working to ensure peaceful resolution of conflict and cooperation towards sustainable peace and security in Western Bahr el Ghazal.

## Impacts of conflict on food security and livelihoods

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*“In times of conflict, there is no time to cultivate.”*

Male focus group discussion participant in Besselia Payam

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The impact of conflict on crop production and productivity was reported to be enormous. For instance, before a conflict, anticipation creates fear of losing lives, seeds, crops and other productive assets. This fear limits the extent to which communities engage in agricultural activities including reduced acreage of land for crop production. Women are also unable to move freely due to fear of assault. The seasons in which cattle movements cause crop destruction are known, making conflict predictable. Despite this knowledge, the anticipatory actions taken by communities are often about planning for relocation to more secure areas and less about seeking support to prevent the occurrence of the conflict.

Violent clashes between farmers and herders, and about land grabbing often result in death, injuries, killing and abduction of children, and displacement. When this happens, farmlands, granaries and inputs are abandoned, and communities move to safer locations. Additionally, the acquisition of land for crop production in host locations is not an easy process and oftentimes fuels disputes with the host communities. By the time displaced communities settle in, the season for planting will have passed meaning that, on a rolling basis, production dwindles, and household incomes reduce, aggravating food insecurity and malnutrition.

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*“We cannot cultivate while the cattle keepers are moving with guns in our areas ready to shoot anyone who crosses their path.”*

Female focus group discussion participant in Momoi Payam

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In the aftermath of the conflict, returning to home areas means rebuilding livelihoods, a process that takes time perpetuating a cycle of conflict leaving communities in abject poverty.

The impacts of conflict on pastoral livelihoods were said to include loss of livestock due to raids perpetrated by other pastoralist communities both within and outside Western Bahr el Ghazal, and animal deaths due to retaliatory attacks by farmers whose crops are destroyed during movements. In instances where pastoralists are unable to access water and pasture due to conflict, inadequate feeding affects livestock body conditions. Additionally, access to animal health services is restricted because service providers are unreachable due to insecurity, reducing livestock productivity and, in the worst cases, causing death.

Respondents reported that conflict and insecurity limit access to fishing sites bringing activities to a standstill. This means that the sustainable supply of fish for both households and markets is lessened causing declined household income, nutrition and food security.

Conflict and insecurity restrict access to beekeeping sites. Additionally, the destruction of beehives during clashes was reported by respondents. Restarting the process means investing more money in times of economic hardship limiting honey production as an income-generating activity.

When conflict intensifies, the production and productivity of both crops and livestock reduces, and supplies to markets are reduced, causing shortages. Additionally, insecurity constrains access to markets by suppliers and buyers since ambushes are reportedly on the rise. The situation often limits access to food, seeds and inputs.

Conflict and insecurity have restricted access to humanitarian assistance and other services that foster production and productivity in the livelihood sectors. Additionally, implementation of interventions that would prevent and/or manage conflict in the affected locations is hampered due to insecurity.

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*“Experts from the Ministry of Agriculture cannot go to the field due to conflict. We used to have demonstration farms with each household receiving one feddan (0.42 ha), but this is no longer possible.”*

Male key informant, Kuajok, reporting the inability to mobilize communities for action

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An example of how the NGO World Concern has managed access constraints was reported. They have worked in collaboration with government authorities and community leaders to ensure that all necessary documents are processed prior to travelling and implementing planned activities. This has ensured that their programmes in the conflict-affected areas continue despite the situation. Procedurally, organizations must get permits to operate in certain locations, and local authorities have their own rules and regulations which are sometimes hard to follow. When the local authorities object to certain activities, there is no compromise.

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*“The Ministry is supposed to provide water in rural areas. When there is a conflict, it prevents us from undertaking activities in the affected areas. For instance, communities in several Payams have informed us that hand pumps have broken down, but we are unable to repair them due to insecurity. When there is a conflict, our officers cannot provide such services. There are also land conflicts involving schools, but the Ministry of Education cannot go to the affected locations to resolve the issues.”*

State Ministry of Agriculture official, Kuajok

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The origin of personnel is also playing a role in exacerbating access challenges. For instance, some staff are not allowed to go to certain places making it difficult to implement programmes in those areas.

### **Impact of floods on conflict dynamics, food security and livelihoods**

According to respondents, floods did not occur in Wau in 2023. Instead, a long dry spell/drought affected Bagari, Bazia, Besselia Gedi and Mboro, and most parts of Jur River County. This resulted in the drying up of crops like groundnuts and sorghum constraining food production, and driving livestock movements while aggravating competition for water and pasture.

Despite not experiencing floods throughout 2023, respondents suggested that floods could be mitigated by supporting communities to conserve forests, construct dikes along waterways, and promote the growing of flood-resistant crops such as rice and fruit trees.

# Warrap State

## Background

In Warrap State, insecurity is on the rise due to an increase in firearms in the hands of civilians. Intercommunal conflicts driven by contention over access to natural resources, especially between communities of Tonj North, and Tonj East and North were identified by respondents. In May and June 2023, communities in Tonj East and Lakes State clashed over grazing land, and more than 100 lives were lost. Based on historical trends, there is a likelihood that retaliatory killings could occur in the future. Anticipatory actions must be undertaken to prevent their occurrence.

Civil society organizations working in collaboration with the government and UN agencies are supporting community-driven approaches to conflict resolution in consultation with chiefs, women and youth. Community-level conflict resolution structures are spearheading initiatives on water resource-sharing through dialogue. In Manyagok, for instance, improvement in social interactions has been observed. However, these interventions have been hampered by the inability of stakeholders to access the conflict affected areas. Most organizations are negotiating access with armed youth, especially in the Luanja area where disruption to the provision of humanitarian assistance has become a big concern.

According to respondents, the most prominent causes of internal displacement in Warrap State are intercommunal conflicts, conflicts between herders and farmers, land conflicts and floods. Twic County hosts those displaced by the conflict in Abyei. IOM has reported 140 920 IDPs in the state and 389 530 returnees as of April 2023 (2023f).

Unresolved disputes over territorial and administrative control continue to affect communal relations. Land ownership claims by both Warrap State and Abyei is one of the examples. Efforts have been made by the Government to stop violence and foster peace between the two communities, including support to the peace conference held in Wau in April 2023. Key provisions of the peace agreement have yet to be implemented (UN, 2023).

In addition to cattle raids, disputes over land, water and pasture, and violent clashes between farmers and herders over crop destruction, and displacement have occurred. In addition, a disease outbreak which started in 2022 with symptoms such as bloody diarrhoea and watery eyes was reported to be killing cattle, goats, and sheep in large numbers within 3–4 days in cattle camps in Manyagok Payam. Vaccines have been ineffective. At the time of the assessment, samples were reportedly taken to Juba for laboratory tests.

The 2023 floods in Adama, Jiwel, Lingir, Wun-Anyii, Wunkec and Wunpac have not had far-reaching negative consequences compared to 2022 when Gogrial East, Twic and West were grossly affected with many displaced, and livelihoods adversely affected. The 2023 floods have hampered access to markets. At the time the study was conducted, for

example, Tonj Market could not be accessed by Jak, Piet, Tonj and Wanhalel communities. To mitigate the impact of floods, respondents suggested the opening of the Tonj River so that water could be channelled to swamps to avoid overflow into gardens and homes. The construction of *hafirs* was proposed as a water collection point that could meet the communities' water needs during dry seasons.

During participatory focus group discussions, respondents analysed the occurrence of natural resource conflicts in relation to seasonality. All of the respondents acknowledged that incidences of violent conflict intensify when resources (especially water and pasture) dwindle due to prolonged drought. December, January, February, March, April and the first half of May are the months of concern.

Livelihood activities in Warrap State include pastoralism, crop farming, fisheries and beekeeping. The identified conflicts have reduced production and productivity in all of these sectors as evidenced by the negative impacts on the communities. In terms of gender roles in the promotion of livelihoods, pastoral livelihoods are dominated by men, crop farming is mainly reserved for women, and, in the fisheries sector, men catch the fish, and women process and market it.

The seasonal calendar below shows the communities' depiction of the different types of conflict and the months when they occur.

Table 2. Seasonal conflict in Warrap State

Conflict type	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Conflict over water and pasture	Scarcity of water and pasture intensifies disputes and conflicts over these resources				Conflict subsides							Onset of water and pasture scarcity
Disputes between farmers and herders due to livestock movement	Violent clashes between farmers and herders over crop destruction – often leading to displacement											Onset of movement in search of water and pasture
Cattle raids	Increase in cattle raids				Isolated incidences of cattle thefts during the rainy season							

Source: FAO. 2024. South Sudan: The impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods – DIEM-Impact report, January 2024. Rome.

## Types, causes and drivers of conflict

### Cattle raids

Tonj North was reported to be the epicentre of intercommunal conflicts resulting from cattle raids because young men are not involved in any other economic activity. Tonj North communities have formed alliances against each other. One of the consequences is cattle raids which have resulted in violent clashes, loss of lives, rape, longstanding animosity and a culture of revenge. Raids were said to be driven by hunger, especially during dry seasons, marriage obligations and the availability of firearms which

drives young men to attack and counterattack. During a focus group discussion in Manyagok Payam, a community leader reported that disarmament would go a long way in addressing the issue of cattle raids. However, young male respondents stressed the importance of the gun in protecting their livestock.

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*“If the Government is taking guns from everybody, then I will surrender mine. Otherwise, how will I protect myself when I surrender the gun and other people still have it?”*

Male focus group discussion participant in Manyagok Payam

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## Land disputes

Land disputes in Warrap State are about contention over boundaries at communal and intercommunal levels, and disputes over grazing land and access to pasture. Boundary-related disputes were said to be on the rise because of non-demarcation, which was previously not a customary land management practice. This conflict constrains access to grazing land and water prompting young men to organize attacks so that they can access these resources. Additionally, conflicts over access to wetlands reportedly increase during dry seasons as the need for water and pasture intensifies.

## Conflict between farmers and herders over crop damage and counter attacks

Another dimension of land conflict is the farmer-herder conflict over crop destruction due to seasonal migration involving large herds of cattle in search of water and pasture. For instance, communities in Tonj South are embroiled in conflict with neighbouring farming communities over the destruction of crops by livestock. These fights involve the use of guns and spears, resulting in loss of lives, food and non-food items, and displacement.

## Conflict over water resources

Overcrowding and violent clashes at water points, especially between January and April, often escalate into community-level disputes where injuries and death occur. These have been common occurrences between communities in Tonj South and Lakes State. Additionally, water fights at boreholes are frequent among young men and women during times of scarcity when the replenishment levels are below capacity.

## Conflicts affecting the fisheries sector

According to fisherfolk, the same river where fishing takes place – Tonj River – is where livestock access water. This interface often fuels conflict between pastoralists and fisherfolk. When it turns violent, fisherfolk must abandon their equipment to take refuge elsewhere. These clashes occur annually yet no solutions have been found. Disputes among fisherfolk over theft and destruction of fishing equipment are often resolved by management committees.

In terms of gender dynamics, the main role of women in the fisheries sector is to process fish, pack and store it in a safe place. In the case of marketing, men sell the big fish, while

women sell smaller fish. The reasons for this relate to the risks taken by men to catch fish in wild waters, their bargaining power and ability to move long distances in search of buyers. Female respondents mentioned that proceeds from the sale of fish belong to men but that both parties jointly decide how to use the money earned.

### Disputes over non-timber forest resources

When trees are cut down for charcoal burning, beehives are destroyed. This has left communities in Warrap State in dispute with neighbouring communities in Western Bahr el Ghazal over the ownership of forest resources.

### Conflict hotspots

Conflict hotspots in Warrap State include Greater Tonj and Twic – where communities are in conflict with the adjacent states – and between Manyagok and Tonj Payam over grazing land. In 2021 in Abaar, Ataponhom and Majak Kot, 43 men lost their lives during fierce armed clashes. After which, peace dialogues were held, and an agreement was reached to have a committee formed to oversee the resolution process.

### Main conflict and peace actors

Actors fuelling conflict in Warrap State were identified as elders who make decisions on the areas where livestock should be raided while young men conduct the raids; owners of crops that are destroyed by livestock; and pastoralists whose livestock are involved in crop destruction. Additionally, respondents cited the role of certain politicians who contribute to farmer-herder conflict because they own large herds of cattle and do not condemn the destruction that comes with livestock movements.

Water related disputes were said to involve young women and men who fetch water from boreholes for domestic use, while disputes over access to water for livestock mainly involve men, and forest related disputes are perpetrated by young women who conflict with each other over access to grass for construction. Young men involved in charcoal burning get into conflict with each other, beekeepers and local authorities.

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*“The humanitarian-development-peace-nexus is the way to go. None of the pillars should be ignored.”*

Lucia Bassa, UNDP Peace and Community Cohesion Officer and Peace Cluster Coordinator,  
Kuajok

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In relation to peace actors, peace committees, cultural leaders, NGOs, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP), among others, were identified as some of the contributors to peace. There have been efforts by certain community and cattle camp leaders to ensure peaceful co-existence. Some of the activities carried out by international and national organizations include conflict analyses to understand the situation, community-based participatory planning, facilitation of dialogue processes, mainstreaming of peace messages into ongoing

interventions including at food and input distribution points, and support to community resilience initiatives. Activities of the Peace Cluster Coordination Group for Warrap State were said to be enhancing a coordinated approach to addressing drivers of conflict. However, respondents called for improved coordination with other states in addressing interstate level conflict drivers. Increased collaboration with the government and other relevant stakeholders was suggested as a possible solution.

## Impacts of conflict on food security and livelihoods

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*“People are unable to cultivate because violence disrupts stability for engagement in productive work. It is also affecting the work that FAO does in relation to animal health and crop production.”*

Betty Jacob, FAO Deputy Head of Office, Kuajok Field Office

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When conflict occurs during the harvest season, crops are abandoned in the field as the affected communities are displaced, causing wastage and loss. The situation demotivates farmers and discourages them from growing crops in the months leading up to the dry season when cattle movements, related disputes and conflicts are expected.

*“Conflict has increased food insecurity and vulnerability of people in Warrap State.”*

Drici Toruko, UNMISS Civil Affairs Officer, Kuajok

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Displacement of communities due to contention over access to land for water and pasture, crop destruction and subsequent violent clashes between farmers and herders force farmers to halt their activities. In some cases, the government takes control of contested land, and no one is allowed to access it until the issue is resolved – resolution processes are often protracted – lasting months or even years.

Additionally, constrained access to farmland due to insecurity and, in some cases, confiscation of farming inputs, hampers production and contributes to food insecurity. In certain locations, production of short-cycle crops has become a coping mechanism, thereby limiting diversification, and contributing to poor nutrition and reduced incomes.

Market access is constrained by insecurity – with fewer people and fewer goods – coupled with robberies along the way, early closure of market facilities, and limited supply of seeds and other inputs. This has exacerbated food insecurity and reduced incomes. Additionally, the costs of food and non-food items rise during conflict, aggravating economic challenges.

Conflict and insecurity are limiting decision-making on livestock production and productivity, and distorting asset building, which limits access to animal health services.

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*“Vaccines are expiring because cattle camps are far away and we are unable to reach the locations that are insecure.”*

Male community animal health worker in Kuajok

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A reduction in animal production due to feeding constraints in locations where they are taken for safety was one of the main issues raised by respondents. Livestock are not well fed, thereby reducing milk production and affecting household nutrition.

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*“Sometimes all our livestock is raided and yet our main source of food is meat and milk. We, therefore, undertake revenge attacks to increase our food supply.”*

Male focus group discussion participant in Tonj South

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The reduced number of livestock due to raids limits the supply and use of manure in farms affecting crop yields. For men, it leads to psychological trauma and isolation because of their loss of wealth assets, and the inability to pay dowry, for example.

Abandonment of fishing grounds due to insecurity at fishing sites and/or along the way constrains the development of the sector, and contributes to a reduction in productivity and income among fishing communities.

According to the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division, communal violence disrupts the implementation of activities because accessibility is hindered. This was also reported by respondents from FAO, UNDP, WFP, and other organizations who pointed out that sometimes they are unable to reach communities because of safety and security risks.

### Safety and security concerns

Respondents reported the increased targeting of women on their way home after receiving inputs and other supplies, noting that the announcement of the dates and times for distribution alerts criminals who then intercept women and rob them. The respondents advised that the choice of distribution points should be made based on an assessment of the security situation – putting women’s safety and security at the forefront.

# Unity State

## Background

Households in Unity State are predominantly pastoral with crop farming and fishery supplementary activities. Fishery households are mainly found in Guit and Rubkona counties.

The main conflicts identified were inter and intracommunal – characterized by cattle raids between local communities, killings, retaliatory attacks, cross-border clashes, and the series of attacks between the Misseriya herders from the Sudan and pastoralists from Mayom County since the beginning of 2023. The possibility of a resurgence remained high at the time of the study. Further, land disputes due to limited grazing and cultivation areas, as well as border disputes with Abyei and Turalei (Twic) in Warrap State, were persistent. Due to competition over grazing and cultivation land driven by long dry spells, farm destruction by herders was one of the major causes of conflict identified. Floods in Bentiu and Panyijar were said to have aggravated the grievances experienced as land, especially in Bentiu, was submerged at the time the study was conducted, leading to displacement and inadequate land. Displacement has also been driven by cattle raids and land disputes in Bentiu, Leer and Mayendit. Fishing has been disrupted by floods resulting in the leakage of chemicals from oil wells into water bodies, killing fish and negatively impacting production and productivity.

The influx of refugees from the Sudan, returnees and IDPs has further aggravated the situation with increased competition for the limited resources available. As of April 2023, there were 434 393 IDPs and 132 943 returnees at the time of the assessment (IOM, 2023g). By April 2023, Rubkona was hosting the highest number of IDPs – 270 344 – the majority (96 percent) of whom had been displaced by floods (IOM, 2023a). There was a continued influx of IDPs at the time of data collection that settled in Rotriak (Rubkona), Mankien (Mayom), Norkur and Kur (Leer).

High unemployment levels among young men and women have left them idle, and predisposed to criminal acts to support themselves. With the pressure for marriage on young men, they are forced to resort to raids to obtain cattle for paying dowry. When attacked by other communities, young men are expected to protect their community, resulting in clashes and retaliatory attacks to recover lost livestock. This has been the case with the battles between cattle raiders from the Sudan and Rubkona, where herds of cattle were raided and youth fought to recover what had been lost. Similarly, cattle raids between the communities of Bentiu and Parieng involved young men.

## Types, causes and drivers of conflict

### Land disputes

The conflict in Unity State is intercommunal in nature with the counties of Guit, Leer, Mayendit and Pariang experiencing disputes over natural resources – land, for example. There is contention over land access, and use for farming and grazing areas, which has

resulted in conflict. This happens when farms with crops on them are destroyed by livestock. Disputes between the communities of Leer and Mayendit counties over land use have created a tense environment prone to violent conflict, with the effects of the fighting in 2013 still causing the communities to strongly disagree. In early 2023, there were reports of conflict over grazing land between Guit and Pariang counties.

### Cattle raids

Respondents reported cases of cross-border and state-level cattle raids that are intercommunal and ethnic, resulting in killings and sporadic retaliatory attacks.

### Conflict and food scarcity

Food supply in the state has reportedly reduced due to cuts in humanitarian assistance, with the available support not able to meet the needs of the population. Additionally, impassable roads have hampered the provision of food and non-food items to IDPs. Humanitarian assistance has also been riddled with concerns over distribution discrimination among the communities. This has resulted in attacks on households to obtain food, with cases reported in Leer County. The influx of IDPs, refugees and returnees has added to the strain on access and use of natural resources in areas where they have settled.

### Conflict over water lilies

Water lilies collected from the swamp along the river were reported to be a source of income and food during periods of scarcity. Conflict over the ownership of water lilies was reported in Guit and Rubkona.

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*“In July 2023, women from Guit and Rubkona fought over the collection of water lilies. Each group claimed ownership. The Government had to come in and settle the disputes before it could escalate to a bigger fight.”*

Male key information in Unity State

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### Conflict hotspots

The conflict hotspots in Unity State are Guit, Pariang, Rubkona and Ruweng where land disputes have undermined peace and security. There have also been conflicts between pastoral groups and farmers, and between the different communities. Rubkona (Bentiu), Mayom and Pariang counties are also hotspots for cattle raids. However, in Mayom and Rubkona, cattle raids were allegedly executed by Misseriya herders from the Sudan.

### Main conflict and peace actors

The main actors in the conflict are young men from conflicting sides who organize and execute cattle raids and criminal activities including killings, SGBV and destruction of property. This is mostly due to the cultural roles that they play in ensuring protection of their communities and households, and in most cases carry out retaliatory attacks to recover stolen cattle, causing more killings and destruction. Additionally, unemployment

makes them idle and vulnerable to manipulation by politicians and other actors with personal interest in certain conflict. Cattle raids were alleged to have political backing, since most of the livestock reportedly belong to politicians. Attempts to build peace through dialogue have not proven successful.

Efforts to bring peace are led by the elders of the respective communities who play the role of peace advocates and support resolution processes which sometimes involve the payment of reparations in the form of cattle, especially when a girl gets pregnant before marriage, and as compensation for those killed during clashes. The Government also plays a role in conflict resolution, coordinating responses to conflict and facilitating dialogue processes.

### **Impacts of conflict on food security and livelihoods**

The nature of the conflict and insecurity in Unity State has raised fears among crop producers especially since cases of rape against women and girls have been reported as they move from their homes to farms in Bentiu. This has affected agricultural production since women constitute the majority of crop producers. When they are unable to access farms, crop production is hindered. Violent clashes have displaced those who would have ensured continuous crop production. Additionally, farmer-herder and land conflict have discouraged farmers from planting, fearing that their efforts will be wasted when livestock destroy their crops.

Raids have affected production by reducing the number of livestock available to households and communities, thereby limiting production of milk, meat and trade opportunities. Land disputes have limited livestock's access to pasture affecting health and productivity.

The insecurity resulting from conflict over natural resources and cattle raids has affected access to fishing sites. Fishing infrastructure have been lost through the theft of canoes, as reported in Rubkona, further hampering the ability of fisherfolk to carry out their activities.

Conflicts in Unity State have affected food production with most of the farmers either hesitant or unable to produce. Cattle raids have fluctuated the amount of cattle and their productive capacity while theft of fishing infrastructure has constrained access to fish, all of which have affected food production and supply for households. Insecurity has cut people off from the markets thereby hampering access to food and inputs, and further inhibiting production at household level.

### **Impact of floods on conflict dynamics, food security and livelihoods**

Floods have displaced several farmers in the state reducing the amount of food crops that could have been produced, and the death of some household members has reduced the workforce that could have engaged in food production. Production has been further limited by the erosion caused by floods resulting in the loss of fertile soils that could have otherwise aided production. The impact of flooding is evidenced by the destruction of

crops that had been planted, with many areas remaining submerged, limiting land for crop production in Guit, Leer, Mayendit, Panyijiar and Rukbona.

Additionally, grazing land has been submerged by floods causing scarce pasture and livestock death. This has resulted in the displacement of herders who have moved to other states in search of grazing land – a situation that has exacerbated conflict due to contention over crop production and grazing land user rights – further hampering production. Livestock diseases have led to animal losses reducing the number of livestock that households possess.

Floods have resulted in the pollution of fishing waters. When floods submerge oil wells in Rukbona, spillover is washed into water bodies. This has led to the death of fish in the affected water bodies raising concerns over the safety of fish that could still be in the water as they could pose a health hazard resulting in fisherfolk having to abandon their livelihoods in the polluted areas, curtailing fishing activities in the state.

As indicated above, floods in the state have contributed to the destruction of crops, death of livestock and pollution of fishing grounds, all of which have limited the food available to communities. Floods have also cut off road networks, and hampered farmers' access to markets and other community members, leaving them with less available food and creating lack of access for those with depleting supplies.

# Upper Nile State

## Background

Households in Upper Nile State are predominantly pastoral. Crop production and fisheries are also carried out, though at a small scale, and farming is typically subsistence, with women playing key roles in the cultivation of crops and obtaining food for their households. The main crops grown are maize, sorghum and cowpeas.

The grievances in Upper Nile State are characterized by intertribal conflicts – driven by the cultural context – where cattle ownership is seen as a source of pride playing a role in the rise of conflict as raids and counter raids are carried out. This has been evidenced by the attacks in Jonglei State.

The 2021/22 floods fuelled conflict through displacement and congestion of IDPs in Malakal Protection of Civilians Camp, which resulted in violent clashes over the limited water, land and other natural resources. According to key informants, land disputes increased due to competition for the limited space available for both cultivation and grazing, fuelling violent clashes between farmers and herders sparked by cattle grazing on the cultivated lands. Due to conflict and insecurity, movements were restricted, preventing farmers from accessing their farms, and constraining provision of veterinary services in the face of endemic pests and disease outbreaks.

Existing vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by conflict and insecurity caused by cattle raids in Malakal and Panyikang, in addition to floods in Panyikang, and the presence of refugees from the Sudan – estimated to be between 20 000 and 40 000 in Renk town as of May 2023 (REACH Initiative, 2023). The number of IDPs in the state was estimated at 249 864 as of April 2023, according to IOM. Upper Nile had the highest number of returnees totalling about 398 812 as of April 2023 (IOM, 2023a), including those from the Sudan. At the time of the assessment, a continuous influx of IDPs to Malakal Protection of Civilians Camp, Malakal town and Renk was reported. The resulting congestion in Malakal Protection of Civilians Camp was said to be putting a strain on the limited resources including humanitarian assistance and water resources.

Youth unemployment has been a driving factor in the state's conflict. The youth of Upper Nile State are facing high levels of unemployment, leaving them with limited livelihood options. As a result, they have resorted to raids, thefts and robberies, especially against neighbouring communities. Youth have been blamed for carrying out raids because of their culturally assigned role to take responsibility of the cattle, and the expectation that they must either fight to protect the cattle or mount a counterattack to retrieve what has been taken away from their communities. Youth are also responsible for the raids carried out to obtain more cattle – culturally regarded as a sign of prestige and wealth, creating a tense environment where young men must meet social and cultural expectations even when the repercussions are grave.

## Types, causes and drivers of conflict

### Cattle raids

Conflict in the state has been mostly intercommunal with cattle raids as the main driving factor. Key actors in the conflict are the different pastoralist groups in the state.

Raids – conducted at a large scale – have made the area insecure, especially for those in possession of cattle. Respondents reported that up to 500 heads of cattle were taken by raiders when the Bukeny and Tonga communities were attacked.

### Floods

Floods have displaced herders from the affected areas, forcing them to move to drier locations where they are met with unfriendly host communities resulting in sporadic clashes sparked by disagreements over access and use of resources. Respondents further blamed the prolonged tension and insecurity on the delayed response in the deployment of security operatives to address the situation in the affected areas.

### Conflict over natural resources

Land disputes have been reported, for example, in the Malakal Protection of Civilians Camp where there has been a struggle for land.

### Humanitarian assistance and conflict

Some communities felt that humanitarian assistance was distributed unfairly, with preferential treatment given to some communities over others. This fuelled tensions and disputes between recipient and non-recipient communities and households. In some cases, this has culminated in attacks that target recipients of assistance intensifying intra and intercommunal disputes. With low levels of production and limited supply, increased need for food has intensified disputes over access to available resources.

### Conflict hotspots

The conflict hotspots in the state include Malakal, Baliet, Maban, Ulang, Panyikang county (Tonga and Bukeny Bomas) – where cattle raiding has occurred – and Baliet and Malakal Protection of Civilians Camp where there have been clashes over land in the twelve months preceding the survey. The conflict has extended to parts of Jonglei as some communities from the state were alleged to have raided 500 heads of cattle.

### Main conflict and peace actors

Young men who play a key role in cattle raids, elders who give approval for raids to happen, and young men engaged in conflict over natural resources and robberies are some of the key conflict actors in the state.

The main peace actors are the elders and local Government officials in the respective areas. Elders are usually tasked with handling community concerns and, in some cases, form committees that investigate and support conflicting parties to resolve the matter. All matters resolved by the elders and chiefs follow customary law and related procedures and may involve reparations like payment using cows. The Government is

usually leaned on in cases believed to be beyond the jurisdiction of chiefs and play a key role in advocating for peace across the states by urging conflicting parties to consider dialogue as a mechanism of conflict resolution.

## Impacts of conflict on food security and livelihoods

Crop production is low because farmers fear cultivating at the onset of conflict, especially over land and raids which cause insecurity that limits movements when farms are far and isolated. Farmers that have been displaced from their land leave farms unkempt with weeds and pests which infest and destroy whatever was planted.

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*“There is very limited crop production. We are unable to access the farms due to movement restrictions. Upper Nile has literally been turned into a battlefield.”*

Female respondent in Upper Nile State

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The situation of livestock in Upper Nile State is characterized by fluctuations in the number of livestock owned, majorly due to cattle raids in Tonga and Bukeny, for instance, where about 500 heads of cattle were lost to raiders. The reduction in the number of livestock reduces the productivity and sustainability of livelihoods by reducing milk and meat production, and supply.

Fishery activities in the state have been limited by the activities of criminal gangs who rob and steal canoes that are used for fishing. Late-night fishing has drastically reduced because it leaves fisherfolk isolated and prone to attacks. Out of fear, fisherfolk have been forced to curtail their activities.

Resource-based conflict has affected the supply and availability of food as crop production has reduced, with farmers fearing for their lives and limiting their engagement in farming activities. Livestock production has also been hindered by cattle raids while fishing is avoided at night due to insecurity.

## Impact of floods on conflict dynamics, food security and livelihoods

Upper Nile’s food security has been negatively impacted by floods which have interfered with production through submergence of farmland and destruction of crops. Increased pest and disease outbreaks, due to floods, have further reduced the productive capacity of livestock.

By September 2023, floods submerged cultivable land making crop farming nearly impossible. Crops in the fields were destroyed minimizing crop production in Baliet, Malakal, Panyikan and Renk counties creating competition over the available land, and reducing the capacity to increase acreage of farmland and the quantity of crops.

Livestock production has been hampered by floods as areas with pasture were submerged leaving livestock with limited or no fodder. Floods have also resulted in an

increased spread of livestock pests and diseases that have increased livestock mortality rates, resulting in more animal losses, reduced production and supply of meat and milk, and diminished incomes for pastoral communities.

Impacts of floods on the fisheries sector were said to be minimal, with some fish swept away when floods occurred.

# Lessons learned

## Conflict sensitivity considerations

- It is important to understand the conflict context and devise mechanisms of ensuring that: (i) distribution of humanitarian assistance takes existing intercommunal divides into account; (ii) provision of assistance is sustained even in situations of conflict; (iii) the safety and security of women and other vulnerable groups is prioritized so that humanitarian assistance does not put them in harm's way; and (iv) collaboration with peace-mandated agencies is enhanced to strengthen integrated approaches to working in conflict-affected contexts.
- Conflict early warning is a necessity. The study found that various stakeholders are intervening in the identified conflict hotspots. In some of these locations, conflict trends and patterns were said to be predictable. For more effective programming, it is important that community-led and community-owned conflict early warning systems are supported and/or strengthened to foster prevention and response.
- Peace and security are key factors when promoting sustainable agrifood systems. According to the assessment findings, insecurity has played a big role in constraining access to the affected communities limiting provision of assistance and the benefits of a dignified life. It has also hampered access to markets which are converging points for livelihood enhancement through the sale and purchase of food and non-food items, while providing opportunities for social interactions.
- It is important to understand the links between climate, peace and security in order to promote sustainable management of natural resources and undertake more holistic peace-oriented interventions.

# Recommendations

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*“Any development that does not support peace cannot be sustainable in promoting food security and livelihoods. It is, therefore, important to incorporate a peace lens for food security and livelihood interventions.”*

Isaac Amule, Policy Programme Officer, WFP

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## National-level recommendations

- Humanitarian-development-peace-nexus ways of working should be promoted by all stakeholders. This calls for strategic programming aided by collaboration. For instance, humanitarian and development actors should work closely with peace mandated organizations, ensuring complementarity and empowering communities to sustain interventions. This is because funding for the delivery of humanitarian assistance is shrinking while needs are increasing.

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*“There is more sustainability, effectiveness and outcomes when aid actors complement each other as opposed to competing with each other.”*

Raan Clement,  
Outreach and Learning Manager, the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF).

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Agencies working in South Sudan should identify election-related conflict sensitivity risks and develop guidance for programming during the period, especially since both political and resource based conflicts are likely to intensify in the run up to the 2024 general elections.

- Fastrack the roll-out and implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan to Mitigate Cattle Raiding-Related Conflict in South Sudan (2019–2025) by strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms.

The choice of distribution points for humanitarian assistance should be informed by an assessment of the security situation in each location. This will reduce exposure of women and girls to security risks.

- Deliberate measures should be taken to promote women and youth participation in decision-making around the governance of natural resources, and in the management of related conflicts.
- Organizations operating in South Sudan should leverage the support of the CSRF to integrate conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity in their work. This will promote the undertaking of more contextually relevant actions.

Provision of security remains a state responsibility. The government should ensure that existing peace and security structures (at all levels) are functional and that they prioritize addressing the conflict and insecurity concerns identified in this and other related

reports. This is imperative if conflict-related challenges to food security and livelihoods are to be effectively addressed in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner.

- Strengthening the capacity of national/local organizations in context analysis will result in programmes that better respond to the communities' needs, risks and vulnerabilities, and foster a sense of ownership and accountability.
- Through the protection clusters, peace-mandated institutions should support agencies that are working with forcibly displaced persons to mainstream conflict sensitivity and peace actions in their interventions. This is expected to contribute to the reduction of conflict between IDPs, refugees and host communities.
- Activity monitoring and feedback mechanisms should be strengthened to address protection concerns in a timely manner.

Forcibly displaced persons should be included in interventions that aim to promote inclusive access to land and other natural resources. This will build resilience and self-reliance, and promote peace and recovery over the long term.

- The Government should initiate and/or implement existing protocols towards a voluntary, comprehensive, uniform and peaceful civilian disarmament programme involving collaboration among actors, including youth and community elders.
- Government should enforce mechanisms that have been put in place to mitigate crop destruction during livestock movements by using existing agreements on designated livestock corridors.

### **Jonglei, Greater Pibor Administrative Area and Central Equatoria**

- Establish, revive, and/or strengthen traditional conflict resolution systems that involve prior dialogue and agreement between herders and farmers on how they coexist and share access to natural resources. Pre-negotiate settlement procedures in case the agreement is breached.
- With new arrivals from the Sudan to Tarogok IDP camp, there is a need to scale up food assistance and replace shelters since the majority of IDPs were displaced from Duk and Twic East by the 2021 floods and have not been able to go back to their homes.
- Engage youth, elders, chiefs and political leaders in peace dialogue and establish peace agreements. This will entail advocating for behavioural change against the culture of cattle raids, violence and the abduction of women and children. These should be condemned not only as moral issues, but as acts punishable by law.
- Put in place a government-led initiative for the promotion of peace agreements among communities. This should enable tracing and returning abducted children to their homes, and provide compensation for loss and damages.
- Provide vocational training and education for youth, and adult literacy with the aim of changing mindsets among pastoral communities. Train young men and women on alternative livelihood options e.g. brick making, carpentry and metal work, among others. This will keep them engaged in productive activities and deter criminal acts.

- Invest in and promote the fisheries sector to change perceptions of it as a low-class endeavour or a coping mechanism during periods of unemployment. Encourage more involvement in fisheries as one of the main sources of food and income. Nets, boats, storage and cooling facilities are some of the equipment required. Trainings in fish processing, and preservation techniques and technologies are also needed.
- The Government should monitor water levels of the River Nile and issue early warning messages with the support of development partners in collaboration with the local disaster risk reduction committees and flood management committees.
- Scale up lessons learned from interventions that have successfully integrated peacebuilding programmes and messages into animal health interventions through youth participation. FAO's Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field School project undertaken in Rumbek and Terekeka provides lessons that should be amplified.
- Develop social amenities (schools and teachers) to increase literacy and alleviate endemic poverty, and invest in road infrastructure to facilitate trade.
- Strengthen and/or establish conflict early warning systems accompanied with early action and response as a measure of conflict prevention.

### Western Bahr el Ghazal State

- Strengthen the capacities of peace and security structures at local level by providing knowledge, skills and materials required to ensure that they undertake their work more effectively.
- Enhance support to community-led dialogue processes so that lasting solutions towards more effective and peace-enhancing management of natural resources are found.
- Invest in increasing access to water for both livestock and domestic use. This is expected to contribute to the reduction of water-related disputes, conflict and gender-based violence.
- Support the production, processing and storage of fodder for use during times of scarcity. According to respondents, communities are still reliant on rangeland resources even during dry seasons resulting in increased competition for pasture and water, and related conflict.
- Provide support towards initiatives that increase the exposure of young people to vocational trainings that incorporate adult literacy and women's empowerment. These trainings will enhance knowledge and skills enabling community members to cope with economic challenges and other shocks and threats. These will also increase opportunities for behavioural change that could trickle down and help avert traditional conflict tendencies like cattle raids.
- Create more job opportunities for young people and prepare them for the job market. This will keep them engaged in rewarding activities and discourage criminal activities.
- The Government should operationalize mechanisms that have been put in place to mitigate crop destruction during livestock movements.

- Invest in more efficient crop production mechanisms through the supply and use of ox-ploughs and tractors to enhance crop production through increased acreage, for example.
- The Government, in collaboration with humanitarian, development and peace actors, should play a role in preventing the occurrence of conflict.
- The Government should provide security at fishing sites. The presence of mobile police would deter theft and the destruction of fishing equipment.
- Strengthen collaboration between security personnel and communities to promote an enabling environment for community policing. Establish police stations in every boma<sup>3</sup> to strengthen localized peace and security.
- Women should be supported to access financing to boost income generation activities.
- Establish a commission at state level to support the resolution of land conflict.
- Development partners should increase financial support to the Government to improve access to justice through the introduction of mobile courts and reduce the backlog of cases in the courts of law.
- Strengthen the capacity of natural resource management structures – formal and informal – to allow for more inclusive and sustainable management.
- Distribute small ruminant livestock such as goats, poultry and sheep to all vulnerable households to help reduce malnutrition cases.
- State government should promote regeneration and/or the establishment of rangelands separate from arable lands.

Support vulnerable households affected by violent conflict in Western Bahr el Ghazal – Bagari, Besselia and Kpaile – especially female-headed households and widows with the capital to establish small-scale businesses that will enable economic recovery.

## Warrap State

- Stakeholders providing animal health services should increase outreach with animal vaccination services – consult local leaders on locations where pastoralists can access these services without putting the lives of service providers in danger.
- Invest in large-scale water provision and water management mechanisms if related disputes and conflicts are to be sustainably addressed.
- Enforce the implementation of existing agreements and protocols specific to migratory routes. This is expected to mitigate conflict between farmers and herders.
- Bring peace-related interventions to cattle camps so that young people receive information about conflict prevention and management, and are supported to engage in dialogue processes.

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<sup>3</sup> A boma is the lowest administrative division below a Payam and is comprised of one or several villages.

- Provide support to farmers in groups as opposed to individuals – group interactions are expected to foster joint problem-solving.
- Strengthen conflict and food security early warning systems in collaboration with the Ministries of Peacebuilding, Agriculture and Cooperatives, among others. Ensure that information is widely shared through radio messages and other community preferred communication fora.
- Design and implement integrated programmes that incorporate actions aimed at promoting peace and resilience.
- Support the diversification of livelihoods if people’s adaptive capacities are to be strengthened through, for example:
  - Train young people on market linkages so that the livestock sector is more productive in terms of meat, milk and skin supply.
  - Provide drought-resistant crops and introduce crop varieties that take a shorter time to grow. Crops like ground nuts and sorghum take a long time to grow.
  - Technological transfer and collaboration between FAO and WFP should be scaled up to enhance effectiveness.
  - Train young people in off-farm activities like tailoring so that they are exposed to different livelihood options.
  - Encourage home gardening and support vegetable growing in swampy areas.
  - Support young men to engage in crop production and link them to markets to increase their incomes.

## Upper Nile and Unity states

- Implement the recently adopted Land Policy to resolve conflict between different communities in the state.
- The government, in collaboration with humanitarian and development stakeholders, should establish mechanisms to monitor the water levels of the River Nile, and put in place early warning systems with clear preparedness and anticipatory actions.
- Strengthen peace building agreements signed through initiatives, such as peace conferences, that should demystify some beliefs including cattle raiding being looked at as an acceptable rite of passage.
- Create income earning opportunities for young men so that they are not idle and susceptible to joining groups that conduct cattle raiding and other criminal activities.
- Set up vocational training institutions and invest in adult education specifically within pastoral communities – targeting young men and women – and equip them with skills that will enable the diversification of livelihood options locally and across borders.
- There should be greater collaboration and coordination between Government, community leaders and agencies engaged in peace promoting activities.

## Annexes

Annex 1. Training participants and field data collection team composition

Team No.	No.	Name of enumerator	Title	Institution	Gender	State	County/Payam
1	1	Stephen Nguen Tot	Director of Peace Building	Ministry of Peace Building	M	Unity	Rubkona, Guit Mayendit, Mayom, Leer
	2	Machieng Kuer Mading	Director of Agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	M		
	3	Elias Kapsali	Head of Programme	Humanitarian Aid for Development	M		
2	4	Mercy Nyaluda Riek	Sexual Gender Based Violence Program Coordinator	Women Vision	F		
	5	Maliah Suliman Totor	Field Coordinator	Humanitarian Aid for Development	M		
	6	Gatcham Mayun Mayuol	Technical Officer	Ministry of Housing, Lands and Public Utilities	M		
	7	John Mayiel	Extension Associate	FAO	M		
3	1	Justin Lazaro Loli	Inspector of Land	Ministry of Housing, Land and Public Utilities	M	Western Bahr el Ghazal	Wau (Besselia Momoj, Bussere)
	2	Michael Arkangelo abini	Extension Inspector Assistant	Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	M		
	3	Pouline Zate	Accountability to the Affected Population Assistant	FAO	M		
4	4	Donato Magot Udera	HLP Project Officer	World Concern Development Organization	M		
	5	Dennis Peter Ochieng	Programme Manager	World Concern Development Organization	M		
	6	Rawia Abdakar Rajab	Information Personnel	State Ministry of Peace Building	F		
	7	Bettie Atyam	Regional Conflict Specialist	FAO	F		
	8	Mary Abuola Barjuok	Natural Resources Management Committee member	Natural Resources Management Committee	F		

Team No.	No.	Name of enumerator	Title	Institution	Gender	State	County/Payam
5	1	Dr. Adol Apollo Achiek	Director of Livestock	State Ministry of Livestock, Jonglei	M	Jonglei	Bor, Twic East, Duk
	2	Akech Maluk	Accountability to the Affected Population Officer	FAO	F		
	3	Mary Njenga	DIEM Regional Advisor	FAO	F		
	4	Gbiaidie Kido Joseph	Director General	Director General-Ministry of Peace Building	F		
	5	Mark Nyeko	FAO	Agricultural Officer-Agrometeorology	M		
	6	Deng Jacob Goi	Director General	State Ministry of Peace Building	M		
6	1	Hon. James Nyikcho Pinya	Chairperson	Peace Commission	M	Pibor GPAA	Verteth, Gumuruk, Lekungole, Pibor
	2	Santo Kireru Manyabol	Livestock Inspector	Ministry of Agriculture Animal Resources	M		
	3	Korok Jowang Kireru	Agriculture Officer	Ministry of Agriculture Animal Resources	M		
7	1	Buay Yhat Yiol	Director of Planning and Trainings	Ministry of Peace Building	M	Upper Nile	Baliet, Malakal
	2	Dak Tuach		Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	M		
	3	Luom Reath	Monitoring and Evaluation	FAO	M		
8	1	Santino Manut Akot	Senior Inspector	State Ministry of Peace Building	M	Warrap	Tonj South, Kuach North, Kuach South
	2	Lino Akol	Extension Assistant	FAO	M		
	3	Agot John	Agriculture Officer	Ministry of Agriculture	M		
	4	Bettie Atyam	Regional Conflict Specialist	FAO	F		
9	1	Mary Njenga	DIEM Regional Advisor-East Africa	FAO	F	Central Equatoria	Terekeka, Juba
	2	Bettie Atyam	Regional Conflict Specialist	FAO	F		
	3	Emmanuel Modi	Fisheries Officer	FAO	M		
	4	Angelo Lado	Assistant Inspector, County Agriculture Department	Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	M		

## Annex 2. Key informant's state and national level

Number	State	Organization	Email
<b>National level KII</b>			
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13	Lucia Bassa,	Peace and Community Cohesion Officer/Peace Cluster Coordinator, Warrap	
14	Drici Toruko, Civil Affairs Officer	UNMISS	
15	Hon. Kuol Achuil Lual, Director General	State Ministry of Peace Building & Social Cohesion	
16	Mr. Ngong - Payam Representative	Kuach South	
17	Betty Jacobs, Deputy Head of Office, Kuajok	FAO	
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Number	State	Organization	Email
<b>Western Bahr el Ghazal</b>			
20	Angelina Anthony Uku	State Ministry of Peace Building	
21	Carlo Vitali Uku	State Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing	
22	Luka Mauro	Women Development Group	
23	Severio Akidi Florence	IOM	
24	Sebit Ibrahim	State Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	
25	Santino Uguak	World Concern Development Organization	
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30	Malual Gabriel Kon	Minister, Ministry of Peace Building (Jonglei)	
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Number	State	Organization	Email
<b>Unity</b>			
34	Mr. Wadar Yak Mok	Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	
35	Isaac Mayian	Concern Worldwide	
36	Respondent	United Nations Commissioner for Refugees	
37	Respondent	UNMISS Civil Affairs Division	
38	Peter Keak Biel	International Rescue Committee	
39	Dr. John Bol Meat	Director General, Ministry of Animal Resources, Fisheries and Tourism	
40	Regina Njeri Muchai	Danish Refugee Council	
41	Respondent	World Food Programme	
42	Respondent	Hope Restoration South Sudan	
<b>Upper Nile</b>			
43	Respondent	Danish Refugee Council	
44	Joseph Thou	Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	
45	Mario Adwok Amal	Director of Forestry – Unity State	
46	Chol Monjok Dau	Director-Forestry	
47	Bor Puot Nyuot	Director of Extension Services and Forestry	
48	Henry Lul Luang	Director of Forestry	
49	Duol Tabang Tuong	Assistant Inspector of Horticulture-Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry	

Annex 3. Focus group discussion participant breakdown

No of FGD	State	County	Male	Female	Total	Grand Total
1	Jonglei	Bor	11	5	16	76
2			10	2	12	
3			11	1	12	
4			8	5	13	
5		Twic-IDPs	5	6	11	
6		Duk-IDPs	5	7	12	
7	GPAA	Gumuruk IDPs	8	2	10	80
8			6	4	10	
9		Vertet IDPs	7	3	10	
10			5	5	10	
11		Lekuangle IDPs	7	3	10	
12			5	5	10	
13		Pibor IDPs	9	1	10	
14		Pibor Host Community	6	4	10	
15	Warrap	Tonj South	12	0	12	67
16			11	1	12	
17		Gongrial West	9	2	11	
18			0	11	11	
19			9	1	10	
20			1	10	11	
21	Central Equatoria	Terekeka	9	2	11	30
22			10	0	10	
23		Juba -Nyori	7	2	9	
24	Western Bahr el Ghazal	Wau-Besselia	8	6	14	74
25		Wau-Bugari (Momoi)	0	10	10	
26			10	0	10	
27		Wau-Bugari (Bussere)	10	0	10	
28			0	10	10	
29		Wau-Besselia (Abushaka)	10	0	10	
30			0	10	10	
31	Unity	Guit	10	3	13	69
32		Mayom	6	4	10	
33		Mayendit	6	4	10	
34		Bentiu	11	3	14	
35		Rubkona	9	4	13	
36		Leer	5	4	9	

No of FGD	State	County	Male	Female	Total	Grand Total
37	Upper Nile	Malakal-IDPs	8	2	10	60
38		Malakal-Host community	10	0	10	
39		Panyikal-IDPs	3	7	10	
40		Panyikal-Host Community	2	8	10	
41		Baliet-IDPs	2	8	10	
42		Baliet-Host	9	1	10	

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This assessment was made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of FAO and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States of America Government.



**PEACEBUILDING  
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This assessment was made possible through the financial support of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.



This assessment was made possible thanks to joint collaboration with and support of the Ministry of Peace Building in South Sudan.

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ISBN 978-92-5-138591-3



9 789251 385913

CC9717EN/1/02.24