

Hunger and displacement: Views and solutions from the field South Sudan



OVERVIEW HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

Conflict

- In December 2013, civil war broke out and although a peace agreement was brokered in 2015, violence erupted again in July 2016. Since then, political upheaval and ongoing conflict - combined with widespread insecurity, inflation, food deficit, and an unstable economy - have contributed to a spiralling humanitarian emergency;
- The humanitarian crisis has continued to deepen and spread across South Sudan prolonging the complex emergency with devastating effect on the vulnerable populations;
- As a direct result of the conflict, the food security situation has rapidly deteriorated and people had no other option than to migrate;
- South Sudan is an extremely underdeveloped country, with little basic infrastructure for education, health, water and sanitation, markets or paved roads. The public health crisis has led to the increase in cholera, measles, Kala-Azar and malaria;
- Humanitarian actors are overstretched in the face of overwhelming needs, insufficient funding, and a volatile environment.

Hunger

- Famine was officially declared in parts of South Sudan in late February 2017, as 100.000 people face catastrophic levels of famine with imminent risk of death in Unity State and an estimated 1 million people are on the brink of famine in other parts of South Sudan;¹
- 6 million people continue facing severe food insecurity and they are depending on food assistance. Acute malnutrition rates are alarming for the most affected population. Since the beginning of 2017, WFP and partners are reaching out to approximately 4.6 million affected people with food and nutrition assistance;
- The magnitude of the food insecurity across all periods, both during the rainy seasons and harvest seasons, is unprecedented for affected populations in South Sudan.
- The combination of violence and conflict, large-scale displacement of populations, the loss of livestock, ever deepening poverty and reduced cereal production, especially in the 'bread basket' regions, has resulted in a protracted crisis.² There is a likelihood of the figure going up due to a 5th consecutive year of poor harvest.³ It is increasingly difficult for affected populations to bounce back;

Displacement

- 1.88 million people are internally displaced across the whole country, putting their lives at risk of food and nutrition insecurity⁴ Displacement from, among others, Western and Northern Bahr Al Ghazal has been reported. The reason for which people needed to migrate was due to food insecurity, as they were largely affected by the side effects of the conflict, such as inflation, rising food prices and food scarcity. Internal displacement was further mentioned in other parts of the country. In Upper Nile State, Maban county inter-communal ethnic clashes have been on the increase since the beginning of the year, which has led to movement of refugees in between the camps of Doro and Batil Yusuf. All this has led to disruption of farming activities and loss of livelihoods, assets for self-reliance and survival. Finally, significant displacement in Equatoria in 2017 let many fleeing to Uganda, with the number of South Sudanese regions in Uganda exceeding 1 million.
- 2.1 million South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries;⁵
- 275,000 refugees in South Sudan, mainly from Sudan.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stability in the region

- Serious resuscitation of the peace negotiations that collapsed between the government and the opposition;
- Express support and pressure on the conflicting parties for an immediate cessation of the inter-communal ethnic insurgence to foster peaceful co-existence.

Humanitarian access

- Removal of access constraints to facilitate easy unimpeded movement of goods and services across the country;
- Mobilize flexible, longer-term funding that allows experienced humanitarian actors to deliver programming to meet communities' needs when windows of access exist.

¹ <http://www.actionagainsthunger.org/blog/south-sudan-plunges-preventable-catastrophe-100000-people-face-famine-unity-state>

² http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_South_Sudan_Key%20Messages_Feb2017.pdf

³ IPC, 31 May 2017

⁴ Humanitarian Bulletin South Sudan, OCHA, issue 16, 27 October 2017

⁵ Humanitarian Bulletin South Sudan, OCHA, issue 16, 27 October 2017

⁶ South Sudan Situation, UNHCR August 2017

Funding

- Fully fund the response, particularly to support the health system, maintain the core pipeline of nutrition commodities. Donors are focused on funding new emergencies, yet the needs of long-term suffering populations must be addressed;
- Although 2018 could be the 5th consecutive year of food insecurity, the increased needs face shrinking funding and approximately 5,5 million people are projected to be severely food insecure in 2018. We therefore urge the EU and other donors to ensure that there is adequate funding in 2018 as the complex insecurity situation in South Sudan, coupled with several external factors like poor harvests and Fall Armyworm outbreaks, will increase needs in 2018.

TESTIMONIES

Action Against Hunger: Part of Action Against Hunger’s work to prevent malnutrition among child refugees in Adjumani settlement involves setting up mother-to-mother support groups. These groups educate pregnant women and nursing mothers about proper care and feeding practices to boost the health and nutrition of their infants and young children, as well as to increase their knowledge on hygiene and sanitation to prevent illness. These mother-to-mother support groups are led by Action Against Hunger’s nutrition staff, in collaboration with a trained “lead mother” who is elected by the group.

Mothers in these groups are no longer rebuilding their lives alone. For Roda, a 29-year-old refugee from South Sudan in Uganda and other refugee moms, belonging to the mother-to-mother support groups means not only improving their children’s health and nutrition, but also finding a community full of trust and shared strength. The groups are a safe space for women to share their experiences and help each other overcome the traumas they have experienced. The groups are also a source of inspiration and income: many of the mothers have joined forces to start small businesses together. “If I need to go to the health centre, my neighbours will help me,” says Roda. “If I have any problems, I share them with the mother group. We are all united. We are all sisters.”



Danish Refugee Council: DRC is, for example, addressing the alarming food security situation in South Sudan by building capacity, harnessing local knowledge and strengthening self-reliance among the refugees and the host community. In June 2016, DRC began the rollout of its DANIDA-funded kitchen gardening project. 350 women are currently being trained in gardening and the Youth Council in Ajuong Thok camp has established a farming club. DRC aims at improving both food security and livelihood opportunities for the most vulnerable by offering them an opportunity for self-reliance and reminding them

about the importance of vegetables for nutrition and sharing small-scale farming tips, as well as practically demonstrating how to set-up seed nursery beds.

Five demonstration plots were established in strategic locations of the camp and the Jamjang host community, in which 14 groups (25 women each), as well as the youth farming club, were trained. All beneficiaries were provided with a package of tomato, onion, okra, kudra and kale seeds as well as a watering can. Taking into account the family size of each household receiving the support, a total of over 2,300 individuals are benefiting from the project. While this first round of trainings focused on the importance of kitchen gardens and the establishment of nursery beds, the subsequent training cycle will focus on thinning and their transplanting. Finally, the third training cycle will be dedicated to weed and pest control, utilization of vegetables, seed extraction and preservation.

OPERATIONS AT A GLANCE

Action Against Hunger	Danish Refugee Council
Operating in South Sudan since 1985	Operating in South Sudan since 1985
In 2016, Action Against Hunger reached 580,433 people with lifesaving supplies; food and nutrition; livelihood and water and sanitation interventions	In 2016, the Danish Refugee Council's operations in South Sudan assisted more than 350.000 people with multi-sectorial interventions, including protection (including a mobile protection team), shelter/NFI, Food security and Livelihoods, CCCM and Demining and Armed Violence Reduction.
Present across Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap and Jonglei States. Action Against Hunger also operates mobile emergency and surveillance teams across the whole country	Present across Unity and Upper Nile States.
<p>In Northern Bahr el Ghazal Action Against Hunger is the primary nutrition actor. We are currently covering Aweil North and East. In this State, to tackle increasing humanitarian needs, we are already planning to expand our nutrition program to new nutrition sites.</p> <p>In Warrap, Action Against Hunger is the only nutrition actor.</p> <p>In Jonglei Action Against Hunger is the only WASH actor, and will continue pursuing an increased presence in Fangak county with donors such as CHF, GIZ and ELMA.</p>	<p>In Upper Nile State, Maban, Melut, Bentiu and Pariang, Danish Refugee Council reached out to 23.000 households in 2017 with a variety of farming seeds and tools. On top of the seeds and tools, farmers were also supported with kitchen garden (for food and nutrition) and fishing kits for those close to the swamp and flood plains of river Nile.</p> <p>In Unity State where famine was declared in 2 counties (i.e. Leer and Mayendit) in February/March 2017⁷, DRC intervened to avert further deterioration of the crisis in 3 counties of Rubkona, Guit and Koch. With funding assistance from Danida, the famine response reached out to 4,500 households with crop and fishing kits. Other 2,200 households were targeted for food assistance through cash transfers (both conditional and unconditional). This would assist famine-affected households to meet part of their food and other basic needs.</p>

⁷ IPC, 21 February 2017