

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

South Sudan relies on rainfed subsistence agriculture and extensively uses limited technology to produce goods (especially food) and services.¹ As a consequence, South Sudan has a high dependence on importation of goods and services from neighbouring countries such as Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Ethiopia, Central African Republic (CAR), and Sudan (hitherto April 2023 conflict).² South Sudan has twelve ecological zones that support livelihood activities such as rain-fed subsistence farming, rearing livestock, fishing, hunting, mining, agro-pastoralism, and gathering wild foods and forest products.³ Equatorial maize and cassava (Green Belt), Western plains groundnuts, sesame, and sorghum, Western floodplain sorghum and cattle, Eastern plains sorghum and cattle, and Southeastern semi-arid pastoral are the main ecological zones. Despite the abundance of resources in South Sudan, persistent floods, conflict, and insecurity have disrupted the population's livelihoods, leading to displacement and limited access to resources, markets, and farmland. As a result, the economic conditions in the region have deteriorated, impeding infrastructural and socio-economic development and access to basic services.⁴

Reports from the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) indicate that South Sudan is currently experiencing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with 9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024, and the people of South Sudan will continue to require significant support from the humanitarian response.⁵ The deteriorated humanitarian conditions in South Sudan could result into elevated, extreme deprivations of basic services such as food, health, protection, water, sanitation, and hygiene. This is evidently as South Sudan is facing a range of challenges, including food insecurity, malnutrition, displacement, gender-based violence, and limited access to basic social services.⁶

Furthermore, analysis from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), suggests that 5.83 million people experiencing a high level of acute food insecurity are classified in crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3), and 1.64 million people in an emergency (IPC Phase 4) between September and November 2023. Moreover, the most food-insecure states were Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, and Lakes.⁷ About 35,000 people were classified in catastrophe (IPC phase 5) in Duk and Nyirol counties of Jonglei State, and Rubkona County of Unity State between September and November 2023. Additionally, an estimated 196,000 South Sudanese⁸ who fled the ongoing conflict in Sudan are likely to experience acute food insecurity between December 2023 and March 2024, with 14,000 returnees classified in catastrophe (IPC phase 5).⁹

The exacerbated humanitarian needs could be a result of multiple shocks, such as conflicts, insecurity, influxes of returnees and refugees, climatic shocks – mostly drought and floods, and high levels of inflation, and health epidemics, especially in Greater Upper Nile (GUN), and in some counties of Greater Bahr El Ghazal (GBeG), and Greater Equatoria (GE).¹⁰

The impact of the ongoing Sudan crisis resulted in the arrival of vulnerable populations that require assistance as well as inflation, further stretching people's coping capacities.¹¹ The Sudan crisis has further exacerbated the situation, leading to significant population displacement from Sudan to other countries, including South Sudan. By January 24, 2024, more than 528,879 South Sudanese returnees, Sudanese refugees, and other third-country nationals had fled into South Sudan. The majority of these arrivals entered through various points along the borders, including Abyei Administrative Area (AAA), Upper Nile, Unity, Northern, and Western Bahr El Ghazal states.¹²

In addition, reports from the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) indicate a high presence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) between October and November 2023.¹³ This is consistent with findings from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix – round 14 that indicated 2,027,331 IDPs living in South Sudan as of April 2023, with a notably high presence in Unity, Jonglei, Central Equatoria, and Upper Nile states.¹⁴ The high presence of returnees and IDPs strains the available resources such as food, water, health, and educational services in host communities.

The situation is further exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which have led to droughts, floods, and food insecurity. The drought impacted livelihood activities such as farming and livestock and displaced populations, limiting access to food, water, and pasture for livestock and significantly affecting the food security ecosystem, especially in Greater Kapoeta¹⁵ and Lafon County in Eastern Equatoria.¹⁶ On the contrary, heavy rains in GUN led to floods that displaced populations in some areas and destroyed crops and livestock, hence reducing access to markets for food and other basic services. In addition, the floods exposed the population to waterborne diseases and destroyed available shelters.¹⁷

To support humanitarian actors' understanding of the complex dynamics of vulnerability, shocks, needs, and coping capacities in South Sudan, REACH has been monitoring the humanitarian situation in hard-to-reach areas since 2015. This situation overview is built on an analysis of quarterly data collected by REACH enumerators through structured key informant interviews conducted with key informants (KIs) knowledgeable about a hard-to-reach settlement in South Sudan in November 2023. Where possible, findings were triangulated with secondary sources.

KEY MESSAGES

- Findings from the AoK indicate **a particularly lower access to enough food in Northern Bahr El Ghazal (4%), Unity (9%), Lakes (22%), Central Equatoria (25%), and Eastern Equatoria (28%) states**. This is consistent with reports from the HNRP that suggest a deteriorated humanitarian situation in South Sudan, characterized by pockets of insecurity, sub-national violence, an influx of returnees, and climatic shocks that seem to have harmed the food security and access to basic needs and services of affected populations.¹
- Potentially linked to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, AoK findings suggest **a notably high reported presence of refugee returnees in Central Equatoria (reported in 69% of assessed settlements), Warrap (51%), Upper Nile (50%), and Northern Bahr El Ghazal (47%)**. The presence of returnees in these states could strain resources especially as most of these states are already food-insecure.²
- In November 2023, AoK findings still suggest that **drought, flash flooding, rising prices, and conflict were the main shocks**. Subsequently, the proportion of assessed settlements where **conflicts had reportedly impacted livelihoods in the month before data collection was relatively high in Upper Nile (24%), Central Equatoria (19%), Western Equatoria (12%), Jonglei (10%), and Warrap (10%) states**
- Despite the reported presence of a functional borehole across South Sudan (reported in 67% of assessed settlements), **KIs in 23% and 10% of assessed settlements reported open water and unimproved wells as the main water sources, respectively**. Additionally, in **Unity and Central Equatoria states, open water was commonly reported as being the main water source** (reported in 48% and 36% of assessed settlements, respectively).
- AoK findings suggest a relatively **low reported access to a primary health care center (35%), a primary health care unit (37%), and a functional hospital (14%)**. The apparent low access to health facilities could be due to reduced programming and humanitarian assistance across South Sudan, which remains a concern in areas with disease outbreaks.³

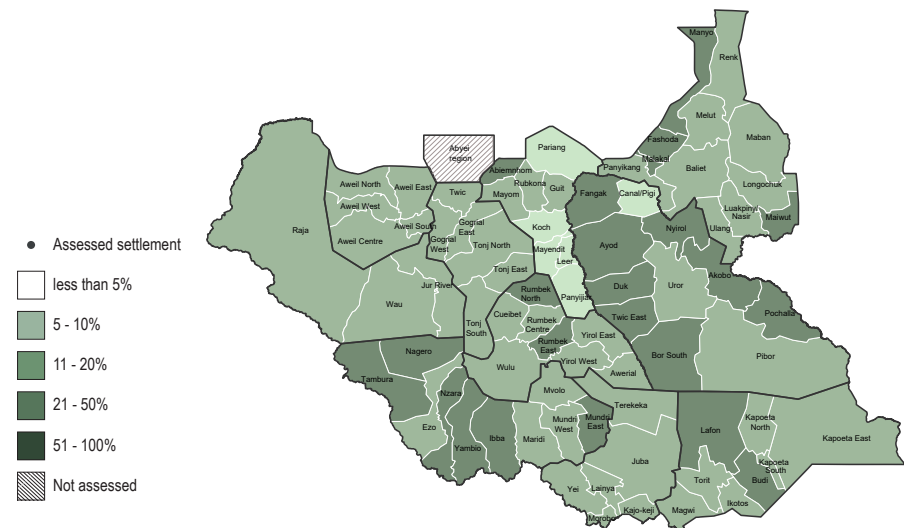
METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

To provide an overview of the humanitarian situation in hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan, REACH uses primary data which is collected on a quarterly basis through structured key informant interviews conducted with Key Informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or received regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). The analysis of the Situation Overview (SO) for this round focused primarily on the data collected in November 2023, and where possible, findings were triangulated with secondary sources to provide an objective analysis.

After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal or most credible response. When no consensus was reached regarding a settlement, the report did not include that settlement.⁴

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 10% of all settlements in a month were included in the analysis.⁵ Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each quarter vary. To reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences over time, analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent Payam⁶ coverage throughout the period of analysis.⁷ Furthermore, findings are not generalisable and should be considered indicative of the situation in assessed areas unless specified otherwise. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK Terms of References](#).

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of South Sudan, November 2023



SHOCKS & STRESSORS

Findings from HNRP suggest a deteriorated humanitarian situation in the lean season (May – July) in South Sudan, as a result of insecurity, sub-national violence, an influx of returnees, and climatic shocks which seem to have had a negative impact on the food security and access to basic needs and services for most people in the assessed settlements.¹ Additionally, in November 2023, AoK findings still suggest that drought, flash flooding, rising prices, and conflict as the main shocks. Of those who reported shocks impacting livelihood across South Sudan (reported by Kis in 35% of assessed settlements), drought (39%), flash flooding (10%),² unusually high prices (10%), and conflict (6%) were the most reported shocks in November 2023. Subsequently, the proportion of assessed settlements where conflicts had reportedly impacted livelihoods in the month before data collection was relatively high in Upper Nile (24%), Central Equatoria (19%), Western Equatoria (12%), Jonglei (10%), and Warrap (10%) states.³ The reported shocks that impacted livelihood could decrease income-generating activities and aggravate susceptibility to food insecurity and basic needs.

Protection incidents

The most common types of conflicts reported across the country in November 2023 were related to gender-based violence (reported in 11% of assessed settlements), violent crimes (6%), revenge killings (5%), and cattle raids (5%). Revenge killings were reported to be particularly high in Warrap State (16% of assessed settlements). This is consistent with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) report that indicates armed clashes between conflicting communities in Twic County of Warrap State and the Abyei Administrative Area. The report suggests attacks on communities, killing civilians and disrupting humanitarian assistance to people in need.⁴ Furthermore, AoK data suggests that fighting between armed groups was notably high in the Upper Nile (reported in 10% of assessed settlements) and Jonglei (6%) States. Similarly, findings from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) indicate conflict being frequently reported in November 2023 in Jonglei, Unity, and Warrap states.⁵ The reported conflicts could result in reduction of farming activities, fishing, and livestock rearing and negatively impact production, income generation, and disrupted access to basic services.⁶

Displacement and return

A report from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) indicated that more than 2 million people were internally displaced in South Sudan as of December 2023, due to fighting between armed groups, climatic shocks, and cattle-related conflict.⁷ In November 2023, KIs in 43% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs. Findings from the AoK assessment indicate a relatively high reported presence of IDPs in Upper Nile (72% of settlements), Northern Bahr El Ghazal (56%), and Unity (51%) states compared to other states in November 2023.⁸

Of those who reported the presence of IDPs, perceived lack of access to food (47%), conflicts (34%), and flooding (7%) were the main push factors in November 2023. The reported presence of IDPs in Upper Nile, Unity, and Northern Bahr El Ghazal states could strain the available resources and deplete food stock before the start of the lean season (May – July 2024).

In November 2023, the reported presence of refugee returnees was notably high in Central Equatoria (69%), Warrap (51%), Upper Nile (50%), and Northern Bahr El Ghazal (47%). This could be due to the ongoing conflicts in Sudan, the temporary stoppage of food assistance in Ethiopia, and the security context in Ethiopia–Gambella. People may return to South Sudan due to its proximity and perceived stability.⁹ Since the start of the conflict in Sudan in mid-April 2023, large numbers of civilians have been forced to flee, and the number of refugees and returnees who have reportedly crossed into South Sudan remains high. According to UNHCR, many of these refugees have settled in Maban, Renk, Juba, Aweil, and Jamjang.¹⁰

As of 10th March 2024, findings from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), indicated that more than a thousand individuals per day have been recorded crossing the border from Sudan to South Sudan since 15 April 2023, with 73 per cent of these arrivals being South Sudanese and 21 per cent being Sudanese.¹¹ Furthermore, the daily flow of people crossing the border from Sudan to South Sudan slightly decreased between the 01st of March (1,521 individuals) and the 10th of March (1,255 individuals).

Additionally, the REACH cross-border displacement assessment conducted in Akobo, Ulang, and Nasir counties between the 27th of November and the 12th of December 2023 suggests some important population flows of South Sudanese returnees in the second half of 2023 from Ethiopia to Akobo County of Jonglei State, as well as in the Ulang, Nasir, and Maiwut counties of Upper Nile State.¹² Potentially linked to the deteriorated humanitarian situation in Ethiopia–Gambella and Sudan, people fleeing the conflict in Sudan perceived that the security situation in South Sudan has improved (15%), and reuniting with family members (26%) were the most common pull factors for returns while refugees are seeking safety away from insecure areas.¹³ The presence of refugees and returnees could lead to deterioration of food insecurity, especially since these new arrivals are being hosted by communities that are food insecure and in which their food stock will deplete earlier as it's shared.¹⁴ Additionally, the capacity of the host community to support the new arrivals is being overstretched, and access to shelters and mosquito nets is limited leading to an increase in malaria cases and exhausted medical supplies because of high demand.¹⁵

Map 2: Reported population movement between Gambella and South Sudan, July - December 2023

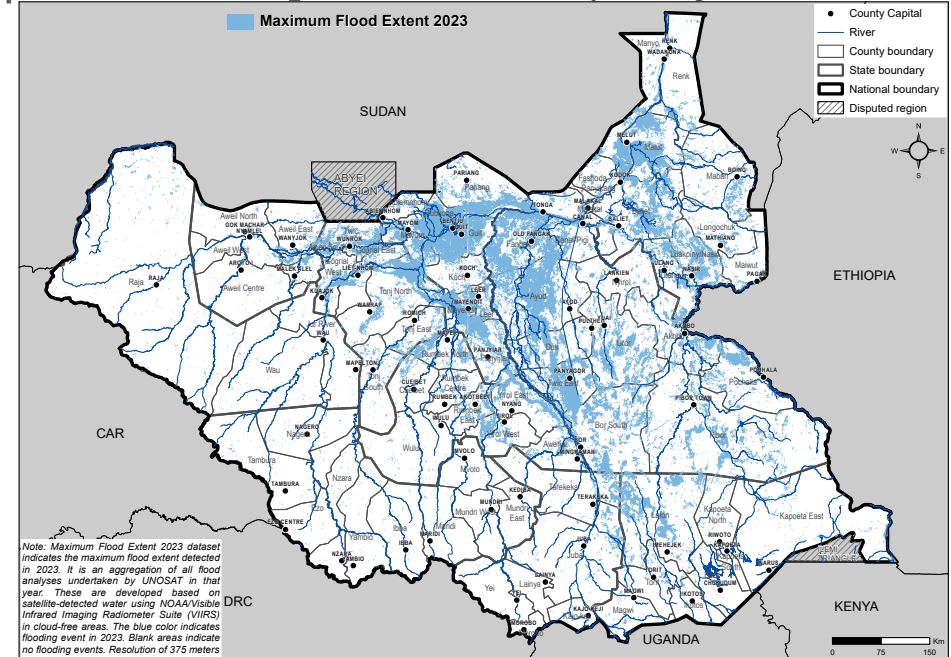


Climatical shocks

Across the country, reported climate shocks impacting agriculture remained relatively high. KIs in 52% of assessed settlements reported shocks impacting agriculture in the last month prior to data collection in November 2023. Of those who reported shocks impacting agriculture, drought (reported by KIs in 52% of assessed settlements), pests and diseases (26%), flooding (8%), and conflict (4%) were the most reported. Flash floods reportedly destroyed livelihood in Western Equatoria (reported in 75% of assessed settlements), Upper Nile (25%), Central Equatoria (24%), Jonglei (21%), and Warrap (14%) states prior to data collection in November 2023. Additionally, findings from the Inter-agency Relief Needs Assessment (IRNA) conducted on 20th September 2023 in Renk County of Upper Nile State indicate an estimated 500 households being displaced, and highlight that the floodwaters caused significant damage to housing structures, rendering some areas uninhabitable.¹

In Central Equatoria, the IRNA reports indicate that heavy rains caused the Nile river to overflow, flooding settlements in Mangalla North and Gemmaiza islands and destroying crops and houses.²

Map 3: Estimated flooding extent in South Sudan, January - December 2023³



Macroeconomics

The compounding effects of inflation continue to exacerbate humanitarian needs in South Sudan. In November 2023, high exchange rates between the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) and United States Dollar (USD), coupled with high import costs, drove up the prices of staple food and other basic items in the markets across the country. Based on available market price monitoring data in the Crop and Livestock Market Information System (CLiMIS) Dashboard, the retail price of 3.5 kg of white sorghum in November 2023 was 7% higher than at the same period last year in Central Equatoria markets and 82% of the three-year average at the Upper Nile markets.⁴ Findings from the March 2024 Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMIMI) indicate an SSP – USD exchange rate increase. The SSP - USD exchange rate increased to 1,518 SSP per 1 USD in March 2024 (367.12 SSP increase since February 2024).⁵ Subsequently linked to the apparent increase in the SSP – USD exchange rate, prices of basic goods and services skyrocketed as traders wanted to acquire USD and purchase goods in the neighbouring countries. Additionally, the increase in SSP – USD exchange rate has led to high cost of transportation and fuel which could erode purchasing power and limit access to food, especially for market-dependent settlements.⁶

Disease outbreaks

In November 2023, despite a decrease in the suspected measles cases since its peak in July 2023, measles cases were confirmed in November in Maridi and Mundri East in Western Equatoria State, Renk in Upper Nile State, Rubkona in Unity State, Twic East, Nyirol, Akobo, Ayod and Canal in Jonglei State and Pibor in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area.¹ Additionally, the National Ministry of Health in South Sudan declared a Hepatitis E Virus outbreak in Old Fangak, Jonglei State, and Greater Pibor Administrative Area in September 2023, since then, 63 people have been affected and 12 deaths, with a case fatality rate of 19%.² The reported Hepatitis E could be severe for people in conditions characterized by inadequate water supply, limited access to adequate clean drinking water, poor environmental sanitation and personal hygiene, and limited health services.³ The multiple disease outbreaks, coupled with the shortage of medical supplies, health workers, and infrastructure, could increase the vulnerability of the local population, especially children and pregnant and lactating mothers.⁴

ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS & SERVICES

Availability, access, and consumption of food

Across South Sudan, reported access to enough food remained relatively low. KIs in 37% of assessed settlements reported that most people had access to enough food in November 2023. Potentially linked to the compounded effects of flooding, conflicts, economic crisis (currency depreciation and high food prices), and the arrival of refugees and returnees, reported access to enough food was particularly low in Northern Bahr El Ghazal (reported in 4% of assessed settlements), Unity (9%), Lakes (22%), Central Equatoria (25%), and Eastern Equatoria (28%) states. Of those who reported inadequate access to food in November 2023 (62%), lack of rain (31%), stoppage of food assistance (14%), depleted stock (11%), and flooding (8%) were the most reported reasons for limited access to enough food. The reported inadequate access to food across South Sudan is consistent with findings from the IPC that indicate a deteriorated food security situation, with almost half (46%) of the population experiencing a high level of food insecurity classified as crisis or worse between September and November 2023. Additionally, an estimated 35,000 people are in the catastrophe phase in Rubkona (Unity State), Duk, and Nyirol (Jonglei State).⁵ Furthermore, Lafon, Canal-pig, Fangak, Pibor, Uror, Aweil East, and Aweil South counties were classified in Emergency phase (IPC phase 4).

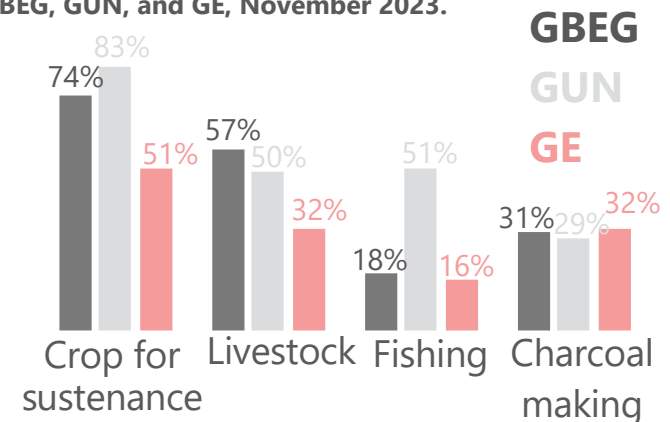
Indicative of inadequate food security levels, where KIs flagged lack of access to food, reported severity of hunger was notably higher in Eastern Equatoria (77%), Central Equatoria (70%), Warrap (61%), and Northern Bahr El Ghazal (51%) states in November 2023, where KIs in the majority of assessed settlements reported that hunger was so bad that people had reduced energy levels. This situation is likely to worsen with the influx of returnees from Ethiopia and Sudan as there have been shocks from which the host communities haven't recovered.⁶

Across South Sudan, food sources* were varied with the most reported being own cultivation (67%), markets (43%), and own livestock (38%). Moreover, in November 2023, reported livestock⁷ as a food source was notably high in GBeG (50%) and GUN (35%) compared to GE (27%).

Reported engagement in cultivation remained high in November 2023. KIs in 64% of assessed settlements reported that people engaged in cultivation. The high engagement in cultivation is a result of access to land for most people across the population groups (reported in 98% of assessed settlements).⁸ Of those who reported that people engaged in cultivation, KIs in 66% and 64% of assessed settlements reported that people had access to seeds and agricultural tools, respectively. Reported engagement in cultivation and access to land, tools, and seeds, are key factors for improving livelihood, food security, and income for the people in the settlements.

While rearing livestock is a main livelihood activity conducted by most people in the settlements in GBeG and GUN, AoK findings suggest that cattle ownership was notably high in GBeG (reported in 52% of assessed settlements) and GUN (50%) compared to GE (27%).

Figure 1: Top four most commonly reported livelihood activities in assessed settlements in GBeG, GUN, and GE, November 2023.



Access to markets and barriers

Reported access to markets remained very high in November 2023. KIs in 88% of settlements reported that people had access to a functional market across South Sudan. The high access could be due to seasonality with dry road conditions before the end-of-the-year holidays. Additionally, the apparent high access to the market indicated that in some areas, people had physical and social access to goods and services in the assessed settlements. This is consistent with findings from the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) which indicated high market functionality scores⁹ in most of the counties except Fashoda, Mayom, Leer, Rumbek, Tonj North, Tonj South, Tonj East, Gogrial East, Gogrial West, Aweil Centre, Aweil North, Aweil West, and Pibor in November 2023.¹⁰

* KIs could select multiple-choice options.

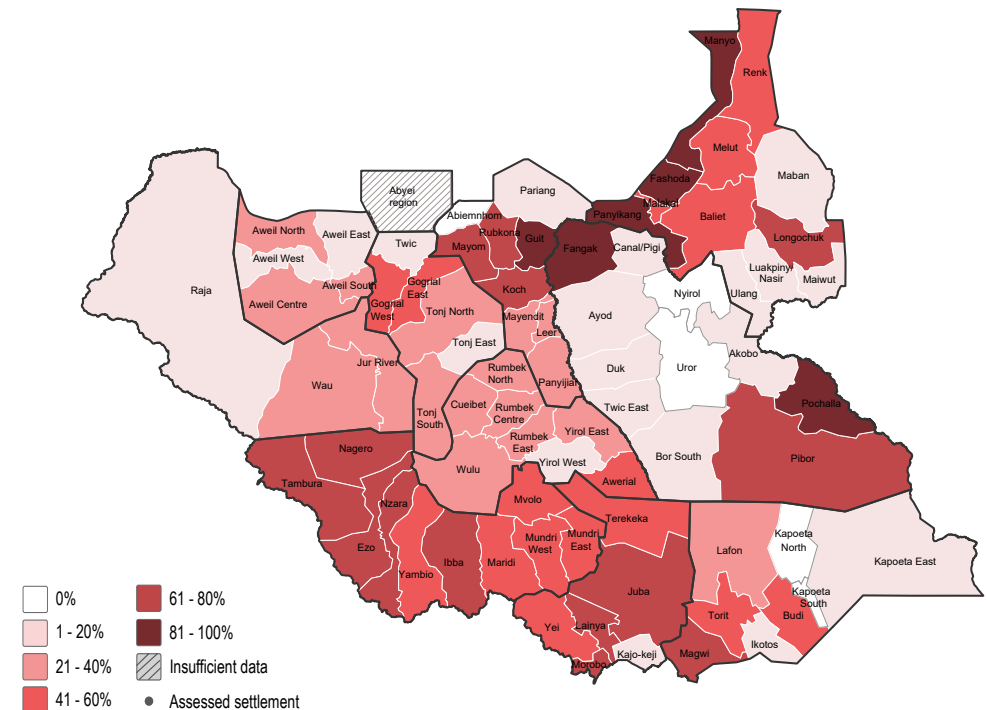
Regarding barriers encountered while accessing the market, KIs in 43% of the assessed settlements reported that people experienced challenges while accessing markets in November 2023. Of those who reported barriers, long distances (reported in 79% of assessed settlements), lack of transportation (56%), and poor road conditions (42%) were the most reported. Additionally, reported conflict that disrupted access to the market was notably high in Warrap (40%), Upper Nile (10%), and Jonglei (10%) states. Similarly, reported criminal activities that affected market access were relatively high in Upper Nile (41%), Warrap (34%), Central Equatoria (27%), and Jonglei (21%) states in November 2023. The reported criminal activities and conflicts that disrupted market access is consistent with findings from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) in November 2023 which recorded 21 armed clashes and 29 attacks on civilians across Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Warrap states.¹

Access to water sources and barriers

Across South Sudan, KIs in over a half (53%) of assessed settlements reported boreholes as the main water source. Geographically, the reported access to boreholes as the main water source was the highest in Northern Bahr El Ghazal (72%), Jonglei (66%), Lakes (62%), and Eastern Equatoria (60%) states. The high reported boreholes as the main water source could be due to increasing hydrogeological pressure because of relative rainfall that supported the availability of underground water.² Despite the reported presence of a functional borehole (reported in 67% of assessed settlements), KIs in 23% and 10% of assessed settlements reported open water and unprotected wells as the main water sources, respectively. In Unity and Central Equatoria states, open water was commonly reported as being the main water source (reported in 48% and 36% of assessed settlements, respectively). Additionally, KIs in the majority of assessed settlements (44%) in Western Equatoria State compared to other states, reported unimproved wells as the main water source. Similarly, findings from the IOM - Inter-Sector Needs Assessment (ISNA) suggest a highly reported presence of unimproved water sources such as rivers and streams in Panyikang (100%), Ulang (80%), Fangak (76%), Ayod (76%), Budi (61%), Manyo (63%), Pibor (76%), and Baliet (54%) counties.³ Relying on unimproved water sources, such as open water and unprotected wells, can affect people's health and food consumption in the assessed settlements.⁴ Furthermore, KIs in 10% of assessed settlements reported that people spent one hour and a half a day reaching the water point, accessing water, and returning to their locality. The longer time spent accessing the water could pose a difficult situation for people with disabilities, hurt livelihood activities, feeding patterns, and food utilisation as food preparation is delayed due to a lack of water and people spending more time accessing water instead of farming and conducting other livelihood activities.⁵ Despite the armed conflicts in Upper Nile, Unity, and Jonglei states of GUN and Warrap State of GBEG, reported safety concerns while accessing preferred water sources remained low in November 2023 (reported in 14% of assessed settlements).

The low report of safety concerns while accessing water could be due to the proximity of water sources – especially river Nile and open wells.⁶ Nonetheless, KIs in assessed settlements in Warrap (42%), Upper Nile (20%), Lakes (17%), and Jonglei (14%) states, reported that people felt unsafe while accessing their preferred water sources.

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements in South Sudan where KIs reported unimproved water sources as the main drinking water sources, November 2023.



Access, use, and barriers to latrines

Overall, reported access to and use of latrines remained low in November 2023. KIs in 40% of assessed settlements reported that people had had no access to and use of latrines in the last month prior to data collection in November 2023. Likely as a result of inflation that limited financial access to tools and materials for latrine construction, a notably high proportion of KIs in assessed settlements in Lakes (62%), Eastern Equatoria (57%), Northern Bahr El Ghazal (56%), and Jonglei (52%) states, reportedly had limited access to and use of latrines in November 2023.⁷

Across South Sudan, of those reporting no access to and use of latrines, lack of latrines (reported in 48% of assessed settlements), overcrowding (14%), and cultural-related reasons (14%) were the most reported barriers limiting access to and use of latrines. The reported overcrowding limiting access to, and use of latrines were mostly reported in assessed settlements in Upper Nile (51%), Western Bahr El Ghazal (28%), and Warrap (27%) states. Similar to the low access to and use of latrines, KIs in 41% of assessed settlements reported that people washed their hands with water only and 6% reported that people did not wash their hands.

Access to health services and limitations

In November 2023, reported access to a primary health care center (35% of assessed settlements), primary health care unit (37%), or a functional hospital (14%) were relatively low. The low access to health facilities could be due to reduced programming and humanitarian assistance across South Sudan and remains a concern in areas with disease outbreaks.¹ Furthermore, of those who reported access to a health facility, the distance to the health facilities (40%), lack of healthcare workers (19%), lack of medication (10%), and health facilities being destroyed (10%) were the most reported barriers to accessing health services. In addition, reports of people being unable to access health care services when they needed them in the last three months before data collection was high in Aweil South (reported by 64% households), Cuibet (58%), Duk (53%), Fangak (51%), Maiwut (64%), Manyo (58%), Maridi (65%), Mayom (52%), Nzara (53%), Twic (62%), and Uror (65%) counties.² Linked to access issues, KIs in 28% of assessed settlements reported that people spent one hour to half a day to travel to the health facilities. Coupled with the lack of medications and health workers, the longer time spent accessing health facilities could influence health-seeking behaviours and negatively impact the health of the people in the assessed settlements.

Perception of safety and access to protection services

People's perception of safety remained relatively high in November. KIs in 73% of assessed settlements reported that people felt safe most of the time. Nonetheless, reported feeling of safety was relatively low in Warrap (46%) and Central Equatoria (55%) states. The apparently low perception of safety is consistent with findings from ACLED which recorded 38 armed clashes and 47 attacks on civilians, across Warrap and Central Equatoria States between September and December 2023.³ AoK findings indicate that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and alcohol usage were the most reported protection concerns for women. KIs in 19% and 13% of assessed settlements reported SGBV as a protection concern and alcohol usage as a protection concern for women, respectively.

COPING & ADAPTATION

As a result of a series of shocks and underlying vulnerability across South Sudan, people in assessed settlements have engaged in extreme coping strategies due to limited access to food. The AoK findings suggested the most consumption strategies across the country in November 2023 were food regulating strategies.

Access to health services and limitations

Potentially linked to reported inadequate access to food across South Sudan, the reported use of extreme coping strategies to alleviate consumption gaps was higher in GUN than in GBEG and GE. The use of these less reversible and unsustainable coping strategies reflects deteriorating food security conditions which could affect the health and well-being of the population. Additionally, employing these reduced coping strategies harms communities' ability and jeopardizes long-term prospects to recover from the shocks as it erodes their resilience (refer to figure 3 below).

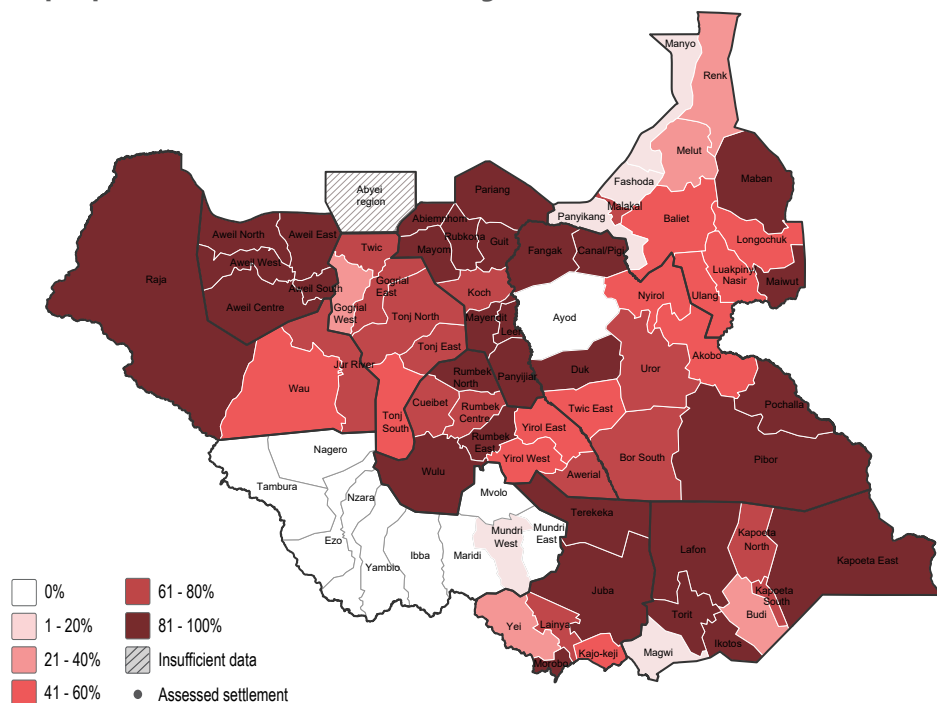
Figure 2: Food consumption coping strategies reportedly used by people in the settlements in the month prior to data collection in November 2023.⁴

| | GUN | GBEG | GE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|
| Reliance on less preferred and less expensive food | 42% | 42% | 55% |
| Reduction of portion size at meal times | 66% | 62% | 71% |
| Reduction in the number of meals eaten per day | 52% | 54% | 70% |
| Adults restricting food consumption so that children could eat | 15% | 13% | 14% |
| Skipping entire days without eating | 39% | 16% | 14% |

Access to humanitarian assistance

Overall, KIs in 55% of assessed settlements reported that people did not receive humanitarian assistance in the past 3 months before data collection. This is likely as the delivery of humanitarian assistance was affected by changes in the funding situation for South Sudan, with the humanitarian appeal for 2023 being underfunded at 53.8 percent as of 22 November, timely and sufficient funding is required to ensure people's most acute needs are met.¹ A reduction in the level of humanitarian assistance along with the rise in cost of production and market prices of staples, have affected the purchasing power of communities and their access to food. Additionally, limited food distribution would trigger communities to engage in more extreme consumption coping strategies. Delays in humanitarian assistance could precipitate the increase and use of emergency coping strategies, such as liquidation of assets, begging, and borrowing, and trigger protection concerns, including migration away from displacement sites, possibly resulting in family separation.²

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements in South Sudan where KIs reported most people were unable to access enough food, November 2023.



CONCLUSION

Findings suggest that humanitarian needs were driven by various shocks such as conflicts, persistent economic shocks due to inflation, new arrivals due to ongoing conflicts in Sudan, aid reduction in Ethiopia, and poor harvests as a result of drought in Greater Kapoeta³ and Lafon County.⁴ The reported limited access to enough food in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Lakes, Central Equatoria, and Eastern Equatoria states, could limit food consumption and livelihood activities and affect the health and nutrition of the population. Reflective of the reported inadequate access to food across South Sudan, the use of extreme coping strategies to alleviate consumption gaps was relatively high in GUN compared to GBEG and GE and erode the resilience of both the host community and the new arrivals significantly. The use of severe coping strategies, such as adults restricting food consumption so that children could eat and skipping entire days without eating, was most prevalent in GUN.

ENDNOTES

PAGE 1

¹ FEWS Net. [Livelihood Zone Map and Description for the Republic of South Sudan. 2018; USAID, South Sudan, economic growth, January 2024](#)

² [United Nations South Sudan, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\), January 2023 – December 2025](#)

³ FEWS Net. [Livelihood Zone Map and Description for the Republic of South Sudan. 2018](#)

⁴ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023](#)

⁵ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023.](#)

⁶ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023](#)

⁷ [IPC, South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, November 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Fleeing danger, finding despair: hunger emergency looms for South Sudanese fleeing conflict in Sudan, 03rd October 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Food Security Situation of South Sudanese returnees from Sudan, November 2023](#)

⁸ The IPC analysis only captured the roughly 280,000 South Sudanese nationals recorded entering South Sudan between 15th April and the conclusion of the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) data collection in September signaling that in 2024 the total number of acutely food insecure returnees from Sudan could be considerably greater than the IPC estimates.

⁹ WFP, South Sudan, Food Security Situation of South Sudanese returnees from Sudan, November 2023

¹⁰ [UNICEF, South Sudan appeal, Humanitarian Action for Children, 2024; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023.](#)

- ¹¹ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023](#)
- ¹² [UNHCR, IOM, and RRC. South Sudan spontaneous refugee returnees, 31st December 2023](#)
- ¹³ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Snapshot, October 2023; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Snapshot, November 2023](#)
- ¹⁴ [IOM, South Sudan, Displacement Tracking Matrix – mobility tracking round 14, April 2023; USAID, South Sudan, complex emergency, fact sheet #2, 01st February 2024](#)
- ¹⁵ Greater Kapoeta consists of Kapoeta South, Kapoeta North, and Kapoeta East counties
- ¹⁶ [Eye Radio, South Sudan, lawmaker raises alarm over worsening hunger in Lafon, 2 September 2023; Eye Radio, South Sudan, hunger-stricken Imehejek residents in Eastern Equatoria State flock to Juba City - Chief, 14 September 2023; Eye Radio, South Sudan, 300 starving children drop out of Kapoeta school-official, 12 October 2023.](#)
- ¹⁷ [IRNA Report: Renk Town Localized Flooding - September 2023.](#)

PAGE 2

- ¹ [IFRC, South Sudan, unified plan, mid-year report, 2023; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023](#)
- ² [IPC, South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, November 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Fleeing danger, finding despair: hunger emergency looms for South Sudanese fleeing conflict in Sudan, 03rd October 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Food Security Situation of South Sudanese returnees from Sudan, November 2023](#)
- ³ [South Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot, November 2023.](#)
- ⁴ Note that the number of KIs interviewed per month per settlement varied depending on accessibility and teams' capacity. In November 2023, between one to four surveys were collected per settlement
- ⁵ To calculate the percentage of AoK coverage, the total number of settlements per county is based on OCHA settlement lists in addition to new settlements mapped by KIs reached each month. Additionally, Koch, Mayendit, Panyijiar, Leer, Pariang, and Canalpigi counties had interview coverage between 7 – 9%
- ⁶ Payam is the administrative unit below the county-level.
- ⁷ For this round of analysis, there was no comparative approach and only the November 2023 aggregated dataset was analyzed and triangulated with secondary sources

PAGE 3

- ¹ [IFRC, South Sudan, unified plan, mid-year report, 2023; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023](#)
- ² Estimated flash flood risk in the AoK data is low because it focuses on a single month, which is well after the rainy season in South Sudan.

- ³ Humanitarian Updates Note, 06th November 2023; Humanitarian Updates Note, 18th November 2023; Humanitarian Updates Note, 25th November 2023; [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Access Snapshot, October 2023; South Sudan NGO Forum, NGO-Forum condemns the killing of an aid worker in GPAA and appeals to the authorities for an investigation, November 2023](#)
- ⁴ [UNMISS, South Sudan, UNMISS Commander visits Warrap following an upsurge of tensions, 21 February 2024; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Snapshot, December 2023.](#)
- ⁵ [UNICEF, South Sudan, Humanitarian Situation Report, November 2023; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Snapshot, October 2023; UNMISS, South Sudan, UNMISS calls for immediate end to fighting and mobilizations in Leer County, Unity State, 30 November 2023.](#)
- ⁶ [UNFAO, South Sudan, The Impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods, January 2024.](#)
- ⁷ [USAID, South Sudan, complex emergency, fact sheet #2, 01st February 2024](#)
- ⁸ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Snapshot, November 2023; UNMISS, South Sudan, Press Release: UNMISS Calls for immediate end to fighting and mobilizations in Leer County, Unity State, 30th November 2023](#)
- ⁹ [UNHCR, Sudan situation; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Response to the Sudan Crisis situation report no.25, 19th January 2024; REACH, South Sudan, Humanitarian situation overview, Ethiopia – South Sudan cross border displacement, February 2024](#)
- ¹⁰ [UNHCR, Sudan situation; UNOCHA, South Sudan, Response to the Sudan Crisis situation report no.25, 19th January 2024; REACH, South Sudan, Humanitarian situation overview, Ethiopia – South Sudan cross border displacement, February 2024](#)
- ¹¹ [UNHCR and IOM, Population movement dashboard, accessed on 11th March 2024.](#)
- ¹² [REACH, South Sudan, Humanitarian situation overview, Ethiopia – South Sudan cross border displacement, February 2024](#)
- ¹³ [UNHCR, South Sudan, Overview of spontaneous refugee returns, September 2023.](#)
- ¹⁴ [IPC, South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, November 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Fleeing danger, finding despair: hunger emergency looms for South Sudanese fleeing conflict in Sudan, 03rd October 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Food Security Situation of South Sudanese returnees from Sudan, November 2023](#)
- ¹⁵ [REACH, South Sudan, Humanitarian situation overview, Ethiopia – South Sudan cross border displacement, February 2024.](#)

PAGE 4

- ¹ [IRNA Report: Renk Town Localized Flooding - September 2023](#)
- ² [IRNA Report: Terekeka County, Central Equatoria State, 14th to 15th September 2023](#)
- ³ Maximum Flood Extent 2023 dataset indicates the maximum flood extent detected in 2023. It is an aggregation of all flood analyses undertaken by UNOSAT in that year. These are developed based on satellite-detected water using NOAA/Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) in cloud-free areas.
- ⁴ [CLiMIS, South Sudan, market and exchange rates.](#)

⁵ [South Sudan | Joint Market Monitoring Initiative \(JMML\) – March 2024](#)

⁶ [REACH: South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative \(JMML\) Dashboard March 2024.](#)

PAGE 5

¹ [South Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot, November 2023](#)

² [UNICEF South Sudan Humanitarian Situation Report No. 9: September 2023](#)

³ World Health Organisation. "Acute hepatitis E – South Sudan." May 2023; [The Guardian, South Sudan flooding hampers efforts to contain hepatitis E outbreak, 31st January 2024.](#)

⁴ SOUTH SUDAN HEALTH STRATEGY 2023-2025.

⁵ [IPC. South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, November 2023](#)

⁶ [IPC. South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, November 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Fleeing danger, finding despair: hunger emergency looms for South Sudanese fleeing conflict in Sudan, 03rd October 2023; WFP, South Sudan, Food Security Situation of South Sudanese returnees from Sudan, November 2023](#)

⁷ The apparent high reported livestock as a food source could be related to rearing livestock as a livelihood activity in these regions.

⁸ [FEWS Net. Livelihood Zone Map and Description for the Republic of South Sudan.](#)

⁹ This is a composite indicator in the JMML that assesses market accessibility, availability, affordability, resilience, and infrastructure.

¹⁰ [REACH. South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative \(JMML\) 1-7 November 2023](#)

PAGE 6

¹ ACLED compiles data on "political violence." ACLED data is compiled using open sources and is not exhaustive. Rather, for the purposes of this situation overview, it should be considered indicative of conflict trends

² [WFP. South Sudan, Seasonal monitor September 2023](#)

³ IOM. Inter-Sector Needs Assessment (ISNA). 2023.

⁴ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023.](#)

⁵ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian needs and response plan, November 2023.](#)

⁶ [FEWS Net. Livelihood Zone Map and Description for the Republic of South Sudan. 2018; USAID, South Sudan, economic growth, January 2024.](#)

⁷ [FEWS Net. Livelihood Zone Map and Description for the Republic of South Sudan. 2018](#)

PAGE 7

¹ [UNOCHA, South Sudan, Response to the Sudan Crisis situation report no.16, 20th October 2023.](#)

² IOM. Inter-Sector Needs Assessment (ISNA). 2023.

³ ACLED compiles data on "political violence." ACLED data is compiled using open sources and is not exhaustive. Rather, for the purposes of this situation overview, it should be considered indicative of conflict trends.

⁴ Note that the low proportions of KIs reporting the use of extreme food consumption strategies indicate food insecure settlements.

PAGE 8

¹ [South Sudan: Humanitarians appealing for US\\$1.8 billion to support 6 million vulnerable people with the most acute needs.](#)

² [South Sudan: Emergency Food Security Update: Rubkona County - November 2023](#)

³ Greater Kapoeta consists of Kapoeta South, Kapoeta North, and Kapoeta East counties.

⁴ [IPC. South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, November 2023](#)

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).