South Sudan
UN Common Country Analysis (CCA)[1]

Version: 24 December 2021

Executive Summary

South Sudan faces serious challenges in all areas of sustainable development. In the political sphere, significant progress has been achieved since 2018 when the R-ARCSS was signed. However, there are very important tasks such as the graduation of unified forces that remain to be completed. The population remains highly exposed to repeated and deliberate attacks on civilians and their property, as well as other violations of international, humanitarian and human rights including sexual exploitation and abuse or more broadly conflict-related gender-based violence, among others. These happen with widespread impunity because institutions and the rule of law is extremely weak, which can easily create a vicious cycle leading to more violence. Linked to this, after many years of conflict and violence there is widespread trauma in a high share of the population, especially those most vulnerable.

The precarious security situation creates incentives that preclude consumption (e.g. those who can afford often prefer to neighboring countries) and investment (e.g. in the agricultural sector: if someone's land can be grabbed any time, s/he will hardly invest in it). Food insecurity is very high despite the country's generally fertile soil, and over 8 million people (most of the country's population) are estimated in need of some sort of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian needs are often linked to population movements, including new and secondary displacements derived from sub-national conflict, and floods that have increasingly affected South Sudan for several years in a row, e.g. in 2021 the worst flooding in decades has affected some 700,000 people, with the gravest impact on the most vulnerable populations. There are about 1.7 million internally displaced people (IDP) and 1.7 million IDP returnees, as well as over 2.3 million refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries. More than 387,000 refugees have spontaneously returned since the signing of the R-ARCSS in 2018. South Sudan also hosts some 329,000 refugees, the vast majority of whom are from Sudan.

Social indicators, especially those on access to the most basic services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation and social protection are amongst the worst in the world (even more so for vulnerable groups such as women and especially girls, the elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.). About three quarters of the population are estimated to live in extreme poverty.

In this context, the provision of basic public services is paramount, but they are mostly absent. A variety of reasons explain it. Notably, with very high oil dependence of the economy and a very weak

---

public financial management system, corruption is widespread and the capacity of national institutions to deliver public basic services extremely weak, especially out of Juba. The allocation of resources to social sectors is very low but that alone is not the issue: the national budget cycle is so weak that allocations, execution and spending outturns show considerable divergences. Other structural factors, such as low population density, a very sparse distribution of people, and very common movements of high amounts of people contribute to the non-delivery of basic services. Indeed, most basic services are provided by donors, development partners and civil society.

To mend this challenging situation, since the second half of 2020 the Government of South Sudan has undertaken some reforms in key areas such as public financial management (which contributed to stabilize the macroeconomic indicators after the COVID-19 pandemic). Furthermore, the national priorities in the National Development Strategy (NDS) were revised, and they are peace and basic services (in line with this assessment). For all these reforms to be effective, it will be fundamental to strengthen the link between national priorities and the execution of the country's national budget.

South Sudan's performance towards the SDGs remains very deficient, as most SDG targets show major challenges and deteriorating trends. Furthermore, the SDGs do not seem to have much importance in terms of influencing national policy, which added to the persistent major challenges of national institutions hinder even basic processes such as collecting basic data to measure progress. The country is yet to commit, ratify and implement many relevant international norms and standards that are central for the 2030 Agenda.

There are also very considerable risks which could easily deteriorate the situation if materialized, such as the return to conflict, increased violence, climate change or macroeconomic imbalances due to its oil dependence and the volatility of its price, among others. The regional perspective also presents important geopolitical considerations, such as the cooperation with Sudan on oil or Abyei, which could affect indirectly the implementation of South Sudan's Peace Agreement. The conflict in Ethiopia may also present major challenges if the crisis worsens, potentially increasing the number of people who cross to South Sudan seeking protection and safety. In the past, these risks have demonstrated to have large negative effects for the most vulnerable groups, which can easily worsen the evolution towards the SDGs even more.

In the harsh conditions in which the South Sudanese live, livelihoods face very high uncertainty and their focus shifts towards the short-term, or survival mode, which precludes longer-term investments such as those in education. As the State is virtually non-existent from the perspective of basic service delivery, people must fend for themselves, which makes them heavily reliant on their networks. These two elements, in a country with so many frequent important changes due to violence, displacement, floods, etc. makes the situation very volatile and multiplies the interlinkages between the 'Triple Nexus' (Peace-Humanitarian-Development) dimensions. Public policy interventions pursuing sustainable development should aim at optimizing existing synergies and tradeoffs along those dimensions, with an emphasis on guaranteeing basic services and the rule of law. Ensuring the lack of conflict and violence would be catalytic and help shift the focus from short/term spending on humanitarian, to longer-term investing on development interventions, and thereby help tackle the chronic repetition of humanitarian crises in the country.

Given the extremely low capacity of national institutions and their worrying deterioration since 2011, to move away from the country's perennial humanitarian crisis, public policy interventions should also be accompanied by the development of national institutions. At decentralized level (where most interventions are of humanitarian nature), the focus should be on area-based programming to guarantee basic services including rule of law and community resilience building, especially for the most vulnerable. At national level where interventions are both of humanitarian and development nature, the focus should add strengthening institutional structures that can undertake the basic operations of a country, such as collecting national data, collecting taxes, etc. These elements would favor evolving away from the current situation, to establish a social contract where citizens pay their taxes and the State (and not development partners) use available resources to provide basic public services to the people.

Contents

1. Introduction

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) is a critical element in the process to prepare the Republic of South Sudan's new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) which is to run from 2023 to 2025. The CCA is undertaken inclusively by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in South Sudan, in wide consultation with relevant stakeholders, including UNMISS, non-resident UN agencies, Government national and subnational structures, development partners, think tanks, NGOs, the private sector, academia and other civil society organizations, among others (Annex 1).

The CCA includes an assessment of the country's challenges with regards to sustainable development and their underlying root causes. Such analysis will influence the prioritization of UNSDCF's areas for intervention in the country. Hence, it is rigorous, evidence-based and objective. To ensure that there are no biases, the analysis is "needs-based", i.e. independent of UN current interventions and of whether the financial resources necessary can be available. This objective is achieved by drawing on the entire body of knowledge available on South Sudan and sustainable development more broadly.

Finally, since the CCA is to inform future UN interventions, it must be geared towards the actions that will yield positive results. For the CCA to be "fit-for-purpose" in its goal of informing the UNSDCF during its 3-year cycle, the CCA must be up-to-date, and therefore it will be reviewed and if necessary revised on an annual basis.

2. Country context, challenges and causes

Political situation

A decade has passed since South Sudan celebrated the independence after years of efforts to end Africa's longest-running civil war. The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018 is in a critical phase. Considerable progress towards peace has been made with a reduction in direct conflict between parties to the Agreement. However, sub-national and localized violence has been on the rise and is often linked to political elites and political competition at various levels of government. A significant benchmark for transition was achieved with the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGNU) early in 2020, and the subsequent formation of the sub-national governments that followed through 2020/2021. The Presidency, comprising the President, the First Vice-President and four Vice-Presidents were sworn in February 2020. Appointment of governors for the 10 states of the country, while taking months to complete due to contention over areas such as Upper Nile, was completed in early 2021, followed by the appointment of country commissioners. In May 2021, President Salva Kiir dissolved both the transitional national legislative assembly and the council of states, to appoint 550 legislators for the national parliament (Transitional National Legislative Assembly, TNLA) who were sworn in in August – the Speaker of the TNLA is for the first time a woman. Furthermore, South Sudan began a Constitution-making process to develop a roadmap for the first permanent constitution of the Republic of the independent South Sudan, which is to pave the way for free and fair democratic elections, slated to take place in 2023.

Despite the progress noted, implementation of the peace process has been considerably behind the R-ARCSS schedule and some key pre-transitional tasks remain uncompleted. The formation and graduation of the Unified Forces is a critical element of South Sudan's transition intended to prevent the intractable relapse into conflict. Yet, troops often continue to suffer in cantonment and training sites without adequate shelter, healthcare, and food and nutrition counseling support. Furthermore, the R-ARCSS says that 35% of executive posts are to be allocated to women, but only one of the governors appointed is a woman and out of 550 legislators, only 116 are women.

The national ceasefire has generally held, but persistent intercommunal violence (sometimes with linkages to national politics), without the establishment of rule of law and human rights accountability mechanisms, threatens to undermine it. (However, there are also examples of subnational peace processes), such as the Pieri peace process between the Lou Nuer, Dinka, and Murle in Jonglei/Greater Pibor Administrative Area, or the Marial Bai peace process in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal/Warrap States, both of which have resulted in written local peace agreements. The precarious peace situation has generally been influenced, inter alia, by delays in state and local government formation, a lack of political will and financial and technical capacities to demonstrate commitments to engage in coalition governance to facilitate the extension of state authority, manipulation of local conflict dynamics by national actors, and haphazard security sector reform.

Key armed opposition groups remain outside the peace process and remain a threat to stability. Against this backdrop, engagement by the guarantors of the peace process, particularly the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), has fluctuated as Member States remain preoccupied with domestic and other regional challenges.

The formation and graduation of the Necessary Unified Forces is a critical element of South Sudan's transition intended as a necessary precursor to elections and to prevent a relapse into conflict. Yet, troops continue to suffer in cantonment and training sites without adequate shelter, healthcare, and food.

Additionally, early August 2021, the SPLM/A-IO saw significant internal divergences within it, with the desertions from the SPLA/IO of General Gatwech and General Olony, the former claiming to be the leader of the SPLM/A-IO. This has led to questions about the incorporation of both SPLM/A-IO factions into the R-ARCSS implementation, especially regarding the provision of troops to the Transitional Security Arrangement process.

While armed conflict among the R-ARCSS signatories has subsided as some chapters of the R-ARCSS have been implemented, including the ceasefire, there remain organized armed groups that are not part of the R-ARCSS and have military capacity to create disruptions, some of the most significant of which are included in the Sant'Egidio mediation process between the South Sudan Opposition Movement Alliance (SSOMA) and the TGoNU. The country remains under an arms embargo by the United Nations Security Council (renewed late May 2021), along with travel bans and asset freezes on specific government officials. Arms are widely available and forcible disarmament campaigns have created more insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the use of military grade weapons in subnational violence. Within the last year, some important foci of subnational violence have been reported in Jonglei, Pibor and Warrap. Four broad factors have been identified as the root causes of

the South Sudanese violent conflict: an often-violent political marketplace that links national, subnational, and localised conflict; cycles of revenge killings and a culture of impunity resulting from systemically fragile or absent rule of law institutions and processes; socio-economic deprivation and ethnopolitics that provide the social conditions for wide-spread violence; and a weak national identity and civil society that limits effective public pressure on political and military elites. Reflecting all these elements, South Sudan is ranked as the 4th most fragile country in the world.[2]

A particular threat remaining from the decades of conflict are the unexploded ordnance (UXO) still scattered around the country: over 18 million m² of land are confirmed or suspected to be contaminated with UXO in South Sudan. While most of them are located within the Greater Equatoria region, UXO are also present in the Greater Upper Nile region and other areas to a lesser degree. This contamination directly affects the civilian population of South Sudan, including host communities, IDPs, and refugees and IDP returnees, regardless of age or gender. Concurrently, it hinders the provision of services, implementation of infrastructure projects, establishment of livelihoods and free movement, being a compounding hindrance to the achievement of a variety of SDGs. Government entities, UN and development partners require mine clearing actions to ensure the implementation of their activities as well as the safety of their personnel and beneficiaries.

The complex political situation is reflected in the governance indicators available, which are extremely low and show an overall deterioration since 2011, with a small recovery in some of them that started in 2020 when the basic structures to run the country started to be re-established (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Evolution of Governance Indicators in South Sudan[3]
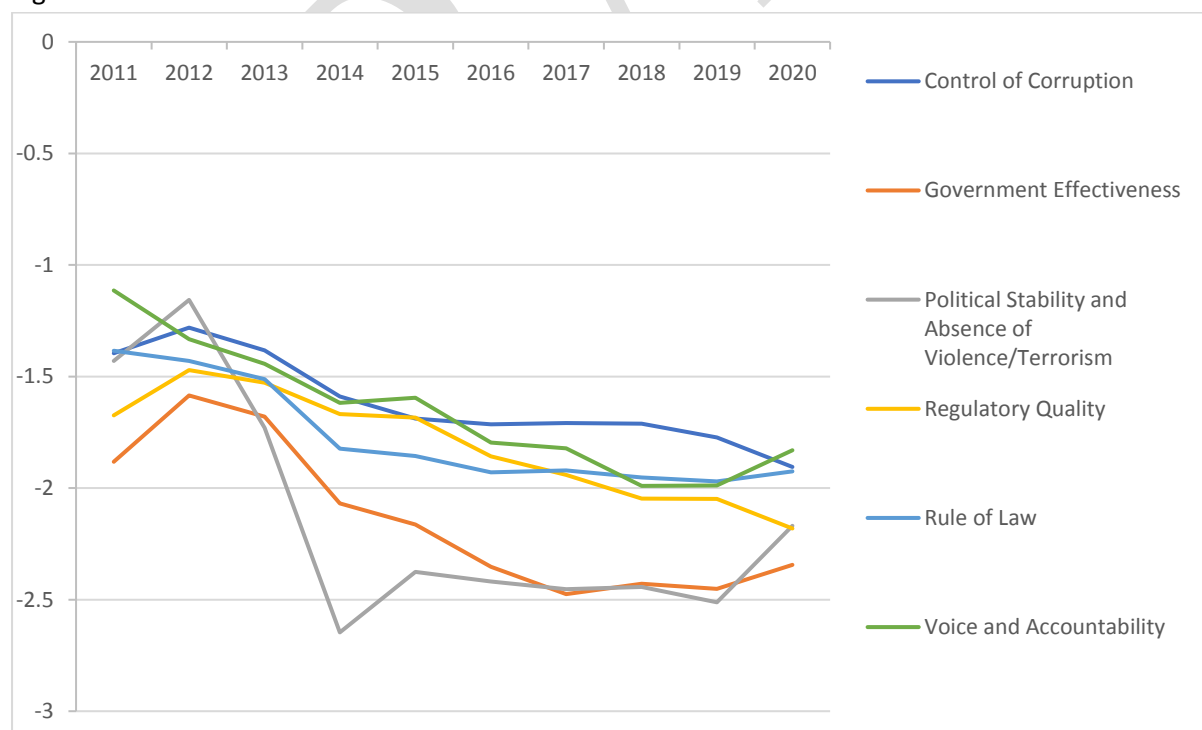
[2] Fragile States Index (2021)
[3] World Bank (2021). Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Human Rights, Violence and Rule of Law

Violence and human rights violations remain very grave in the country, though in 2020 there was a slight decrease in the overall number of violations and abuses perpetrated by armed groups. A positive development was that four out of five protection of civilians' (PoC) sites under the protection of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) transitioned to conventional camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) which are under sovereign control of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), and the situation in those sites remains calm. Despite this, the population remains highly exposed to repeated and deliberate attacks on civilians and their property, as well as other violations of international, humanitarian and human rights laws including sexual violence. Community-based militias are responsible for about 80% of killings and injuries caused to civilians as well as abductions and conflict-related sexual violence during attacks in pockets of South Sudan.[4] In 2020 the killing of 2,421 civilians was documented, more than double the previous year (also, just over 1,500 people were injured, up from 866 in 2019). The figures represent a significant increase in violence compared to the year before, and the clashes were concentrated in just 13% of the country's 517 payams[5] involving community-based militias rather than conventional parties to the conflict.[6] Of particular concern was the sharp increase in abductions, which rose by more than 300% in 2020.[7] Many of the victims were children stolen from their families during militia-led raids. Men were also abducted by conventional parties for forced military recruitment and labour.[8] South Sudan remains one of the most severe protection crises in the world.

The Commission on Human Rights noted in September 2021 that "a hallmark of the conflict since 2016 has been the increasing securitisation of the State security apparatus, which has further had a detrimental impact on civil and political rights. As State security institutions have engendered a heightened climate of fear among communities and civil society, individuals continue to be deprived of their fundamental freedoms including the freedoms of opinion, expression, and assembly which has impacted on human rights defenders, the publication of newspapers, the work of journalists, and freedom of the press more generally. In the context of economic crimes, the Government of South Sudan has intimidated and harassed journalists seeking to expose corrupt Government officials through arrest, detention, and in some instances physical violence."[9]

The situation of women's human rights and right to bodily autonomy is highly concerning across the country. Limited availability of services and even further limited access to the same is compounded by deep-seated socio-cultural beliefs, values and norms that weigh against maternal health and GBV services. Gender inequality and GBV are perpetuated by the conflict, weakened community and social support system, weak institutional capacities for GBV prevention and response, and cultural norms, which also discourage reporting of GBV cases to service providers. A total of 9,647 incidents of GBV were reported from Jan-December 2020. Most survivors were host population (67%) followed by IDPs (24%), while 6% of survivors were refugees, 4% of survivors have a disability, and 3% are

---

[4] "Annual Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians", Human Rights Division of the UN Mission in South Sudan.
[5] Payams are a local level of decentralized administrative area in South Sudan.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Source: Human rights violations and related economic crimes in the Republic of South Sudan, Conference room paper of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, 23 September 2021, A/HRC/48/CRP.3

unaccompanied minors. Physical assault (37%) remains to be the most prevalent type of GBV followed by sexual assault (rape 19%, and sexual assault 5%) – 59% of survivors reported within three days from the incident's date, 19% reported after one. These data remain the tip of the iceberg since violence against women and girls is highly underreported and normalized due to the socio-cultural beliefs and practices. There is also limited investment on addressing GBV compared to the scale of the issue, e.g. the national government budget does not reflect specific measures to address the issues of protecting women's human rights.

While recorded cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) decreased by 21% in 2020, following a declining trend that started in 2019 and (so far) continues in 2021,[10] the number of survivors continues to be a concern. A 31% decline in the number of survivors was noted during the second quarter of 2021 relative to the first quarter. Community-based militias and/or civil defence groups are currently leading as perpetrators of CRSV and have overtaken the conventional parties.[11] As a step to tackle CRSV, the Action Plan for the Armed Forces on Addressing CRSV in South Sudan was launched in June 2021. Other benchmarks towards addressing impunities related to crimes committed against women and girls were the establishment of juvenile and gender-based violence courts: since inception of the latter in early 2021, several perpetrators of sexual violence have been sentenced to prison by the court. However, much more remains to be achieved as sexual and gender-based violence are still pervasive across the country and COVID-19 aggravated it.

In Chapter V of the R-ARCSS, the parties committed to establish a Hybrid Court, a Commission of Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) and a Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA). However, the operationalization of these aspects is yet to be done. CRSV has been a pervasive and omnipresent feature of the conflict in South Sudan, leaving survivors, their families and communities with devastating consequences, including physical injuries and psycho-social trauma, loss of livelihoods and educational opportunities, stigmatization and social exclusion, among others. COVID-19 aggravated the situation, through increased household stress and women living with their perpetrators. Despite a few sentences against CRSV cases much remains to be done, partly because support networks and service provision to victims remain limited and mainly in urban areas.

Generally, South Sudan suffers from a heritage of weak public governance characterised by a high degree of centralisation around a weak political centre, which have resulted in the fragmentation of the country's political institutions.[12] In 2020, the country ranked 53rd out of 54 countries in the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance.[13] In the context of State-building and peace building, fostering a shared national identity remains a challenge, and South Sudan's communities are yet to develop a widely shared and integrative national identity able to override the country's ethnopolitical divisions. Prolonged violence, a fragmented society and subnational conflicts affect the safeguarding and protection of intangible and tangible cultural assets. The population is highly diverse, with over 65 tribes, cultural and ethnic groups speaking a similar number of indigenous languages. This is an invaluable wealth that must be preserved. The promotion of cultural assets and heritage and creative industries can be very important for economic and social development and intercultural dialogue for

---

[10] Ibid.
[11] HRD UNMISS. Jan-March 2021.
[12] Trias Consulting (2021).
[13] https://iiag.online/data.html?meas=GOVERNANCE&loc=SS&view=overview

peace and reconciliation on common shared heritage. Hence, there is a strong need to inculcate the respect for cultural diversity among communities and escalate the role of culture to address issues of respect and national identity.

The situation with regards to violence is also a consequence of the extremely weak institutions in the country, which complicates the rule of law. This is visible in the limited number and the little capacity of statutory courts to adjudicate cases, as well as the poor capacity of law enforcement agencies to apprehend and arraign suspects in court. For instance, in Jonglei State alone there may be more than 3,000 civil and criminal cases pending in courts due to alleged lack of manpower.[14] In communal conflicts where hundreds of people are killed in cattle-related violence and revenge attacks, many of the culprits are neither arrested nor prosecuted, generating a feeling of impunity, and for the victims, powerlessness. Open prison can be allowed in certain conditions for offenses that are not serious, while at the same time family relatives of a suspect who cannot be found, may be detained instead. At the same time, prisons and detention centers across the country are often overcrowded, with detainees spending a long time without trial – by one estimate, 40% of detainees awaiting trial for serious offenses such as murder and rape have been waiting for more over one year to be judged. There have also been reports of extra judiciary killings.[15] Customary courts can help alleviate the adjudication burden with regards to family and intercommunal matters, but they are not supposed to judge serious offenses and their procedures are not always based on human rights.

While the causality may be better understood as a circular (not linear) relationship, the extremely low capacity to implement the rule of law, added to dramatically high poverty and hardship, and the increased incentives for resource competition during 2020/2021, may have partly contributed to the uptick in violence at subnational level, e.g. in the form of killings, abductions, asset stripping and cattle raiding (cattle is generally perceived as a mechanism to accumulate wealth; that and the generally weak rule of law explain why it can often be a source of frictions).

Demographic Structure, Gender and Youth

The country's current population has been projected to be 13.72 million people in 2021, of which 51.1% are male (7.01 million) and 48.9% are female (6.71 million).[16] Of all the males, 42.3% were under 14 years old in 2018 which means there are about 3 million boys in the country.[17] The urban population was reported at 2,261,021 in 2020, reflecting a tremendous growth in the last decade.[18] That same year, urban annual population growth rate in 2020 was estimated at 2.7%.[19] At about 83.5%, though, most people still live in rural areas.

Overall, the country's population is very young: 73.6% (10.1 million) are under the age of 30, while 48.1% (6.6 million) below the age of 15 – yet there are no recognized children and youth representation bodies. The population in the working age group (15-64 years) constitute 49.6%, while

---

[14] https://eyeradio.org/jonglei-records-3000-court-backlogs/
[15] https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27345&LangID=E
[16] National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).
[17] World Development Indicators
[18] The World Bank. Actual values, historical data, forecasts and projections were sourced on August 2021
[19] The World Bank. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=SS

the old age population (65+ years) is only 1.6%.[20] This demographic structure is associated with rapid urbanization: given the scarcity of economic opportunities in the rural areas, the youth are often inclined to migrate to urban areas in search of employment and other economic opportunities, which has contributed to the rapid urbanization being witnessed in the country. One emerging trend seems to be that of young, unskilled or semi-skilled males going to Juba in search of better jobs and an urban lifestyle, as many are having difficulty (re)adapting to rural life after years of displacement in urban areas or after having fought during the war.[21] This phenomenon calls for deliberate and sustained investment in young people, across all age categories, across the country, but more so in the towns and cities.

The deep-seated patriarchal culture that limits women and girls' equal participation is one of the major impediments to reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend as the rate of child marriage and teenage pregnancies remains overwhelmingly high. Operational interference, including from local youth groups, is becoming an increasing challenge for safe and secure humanitarian access in South Sudan. For several years, different youth groups in South Sudan have regularly voiced their discontent with the lack of employment opportunities and education services available to them. It is important to note that the term "youth" in South Sudan tends to be almost exclusively male with many females denied the opportunity to be youth altogether on account of factors, such as child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and their care duties. Significant gaps in education and training services across the country remain, which have clear linkages to employment opportunities, as well as gender gaps in both schooling and jobs[22].

Another notable concern is that while about 73.6% of the total population of South Sudan is below the age of 30, this population is perceived to be systematically excluded from decision making process and structures based on their age and assumption that they are inexperienced despite the Transitional Constitution (2011) advocating for their right to participation. While young parliamentarians were appointed in the recently constituted assembly, there is need for continued advocacy with the parties to R-ARCSS to commit the allocated numbers in their party constitutions to young people at all levels of governance.

Other factors linking demographic structure and violence include the country's large income inequality (Gini coefficient in 2016 was 44.1), the fact that 80.4% of the country's population is rural (benefiting from very few services, including security), the widespread availability of weapons, no basic services and extremely little education especially among women and girls, and the consequent meagre prospects for jobs, e.g. youth unemployment in 2019 was estimated at 29%. These factors may have an influence on the emergence of armed youth groups and some cultural practices, e.g. herder boys are often engaged in cattle camps where education is not available and the conditions are harsh, becoming familiar with weapons at an early age. This is aggravated by the fact that in some areas in the country, people are cut off from all forms of media channels, and hence interpersonal communication is the only way to share information at the community level. This leaves vulnerable people unprotected against diseases, harmful cultural practices or human rights violations. In 2021,

---

[20] South Sudan Population Projections 2020-2040, National Bureau of Statistics, July 2016.
[21] Migration, Environment and Climate Change: ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE - https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_environment.pdf
[22] Youth Interference in The Humanitarian Response: A Collective Response and Engagement Strategy 26 May 2021

Monyomiji youth in Torit buried a man believed to be a rainmaker because there was no rain during the season.

The conflict, violence and repeated crises (including COVID-19) have intensified pre-existing inequalities of women and girls, who engage in daily survival tasks and are often exposed to all forms of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse. Also, females are often excluded from influencing and participating in community and political structures but are still expected to strictly comply with any decisions reached. These institutions discriminate against women and disadvantage the country's young people, who are ostracized from both community and political structures, likewise unable to meaningfully participate in and access opportunities for upward mobility. In the backdrop of Covid19, the likelihood of girls not being able to return to schools due to the rise in child marriage reverses the already fragile situation for the girls and women. Against this background, some children may easily be recruited to fight, and they may develop an attitude of entitlement based on dividends of war, a pattern that may be reinforced by the fact that the country's elites also have a military background and remain in power after many years. The demands for jobs and other services by youth in 2020/2021 have aggravated insecurity (including threats and even attacks) in some areas of the country towards NGOs and development partners, including the UN. Only in the first six months of 2021 four humanitarian workers were killed, and millions of dollars of humanitarian supplies looted or destroyed.

Gender and violence are closely interlinked. Some 65% of women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, and about 51% have suffered intimate partner violence (IPV). About 33% of women have experienced sexual violence from a non-partner, primarily during attacks or raids. Most girls and women experience sexual violence for the first time under the age of 18. Children comprise around 25% of all reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence, though numbers may be much higher due to factors such as under-reporting. High rates of GBV, including child marriage, have direct negative impact on the health, resilience, and productive capacity of survivors, leading to increased poverty and creating a self-reinforcing cycle of underdevelopment, violence, poverty and vulnerability. Challenging the constraints that women face must be treated as a key component in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Food Security and Nutrition

Food insecurity in South Sudan is driven by a range of shocks and stress, including protracted macroeconomic crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, subnational conflicts and mass displacement, returning home, loss of livelihoods, unemployment, lack of access to basic social services (and the intrinsic insufficient investments), outbreak of preventable diseases, or the effects of climate change including widespread flooding, prolonged spells and periods of drought and associated shifts in cultivating seasons and livestock migration, among others.

Structurally, the agricultural sector in South Sudan consists mainly of agriculturalists and pastoralists – although the lines can be blurry since many practice both activities. While farming, especially in remote parts of the country, is mainly pursued as a subsistence activity, cattle form the basis of trading and are the principal source of wealth within and across communities. The agriculturalist-pastoralist split often results in serious tensions, which historically led to the creation of well-established and

sophisticated customary systems of conflict management in most parts of the country. However, resolution of organized conflict has not relied on those customary systems, which weakened by decades of armed conflict, displacement, shocks and economic stress. As a result, despite the country's generally fertile soil, South Sudan does not produce enough food to feed its entire population and must import food heavily. Although 70% of the country's land is arable[23], only 4% of the arable land is being used, and 97% of the agricultural land is not irrigated. These, added to the common lack of appropriate tools and inputs, translate into very low agricultural productivity. In such conditions, when factors such as conflict, floods, pests, etc. arise, agricultural productivity decreases (e.g. due to waterlogging). The situation can easily turn into a humanitarian crisis – which in turn can be aggravated by obstructions (by armed forces or even civil society) to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In South Sudan women are responsible for 60% to 80% of food production; but they are generally regarded as farm assistants, and not as farmers or economic agents in their own right.[24] As a result of the conflict many have been displaced from their fertile lands. Access to and ownership of land are important aspects of women's security, yet women are discriminated against due to patriarchal cultural laws and practices. This, even though the Land Act of 2009 allows all citizens to own and access land irrespective of their sex, ethnicity or religion.

Before the armed conflict started in 2013, land and livestock holdings were more secure, as was the food security situation with comparatively less poverty and less vulnerability. As the crisis evolved populations unable to flee were subject to ever more compounding shocks which included the deliberate destruction of livelihoods, taking care of relatives from other households, burning of property and looting of livestock and businesses. Such conflict shocks came in successive waves causing heightened vulnerability and large-scale displacement. Those with resources either left, were killed, or joined a growing number of extreme poor living in the safety of the bush or on the islands surviving on wild foods – many died from disease and hunger. By 2015/2016, the macroeconomic crisis resulted in hyperinflation with market prices unaffordable to the majority. The crisis also spread beyond Greater Upper Nile into Western Bahr El Ghazal and the Equatorias (Green Belt); contributing to both increased rural and evermore urban poverty and vulnerability. Furthermore, large parts of the country experienced unprecedented climatic shocks: in 2019 and 2020 historically unprecedented levels of flooding and dry spells, the arrival of new crop pests: the Fall Army worm (2018) and later Desert Locusts (2020), which caused shortage in food production and subsequent supply to urban areas. If extended droughts are more frequent and the country loses some of its vegetation, pests will also be more likely because more favorable conditions for these insects will be given.

More recently, COVID-19 has hit disproportionately urban livelihoods (relative to rural), with its indirect effects on market prices and disruption to an already complex commercial and humanitarian supply chain. The seasonality of rains, hunger, malnutrition, disease, cropping and grazing patterns further challenges the recovery and response. The current crisis is taking place at a time when needs, measured by the IPC at 7.24 million (a 15% increase on 2020 experiencing crisis, emergency & catastrophe levels of food insecurity) necessitate that scarce resources spread ever more thinly.

---

[23] Dao, You, Alberto and Folledo (2012). "Assessing Agricultural Potential in South Sudan – A Spatial Analysis Method". Available at https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/40503

[24] Government of the Republic of South Sudan (2019)

In 2020 net cereal production was estimated at 874,000 tonnes[25], with the 2021 cereal deficit estimated at 465,500 tonnes. This deficit, still above the past five-year average, contributes to the record-high levels of food insecurity in the country, particularly in areas where conflict and flooding affected crop and livestock production. This phenomenon also aggravates the country's dependency on imported seeds, which is a vulnerability.

During 2019 and 2020, South Sudan suffered the worst flooding in 60 years, which affected 1.4 million people. The consequences were so disastrous that the financial requirements to implement the country's 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan could only be financed at about 58%. The ensuing effects have been very tangible. For instance, in April 2021 WFP announced food ration cuts to nearly 700,000 refugees and internally displaced people, who now receive 50% of a full ration, down from 70%.

As of June 2021, humanitarian needs remain high. South Sudan is facing its highest levels of food insecurity since the country declared independence 10 years ago. According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview, some 8.3 million people are estimated in need of assistance[26], an increase of 800,000 people from 2020. The main reasons are high risk of food insecurity, the effects of COVID-19, persistent poor macroeconomic conditions, and the impact of flooding on livelihoods. Refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups were also heavily affected by ration cuts provided by humanitarian actors due to funding constraints. This has aggravated vulnerabilities, negative copying mechanisms and risks.

Important challenges for the population to access life-saving assistance and services, are the difficulty of humanitarian actors to reach the people in need (e.g. due to violence), and the country's very poor road infrastructure. South Sudan ranks penultimate (only ahead of Somalia) in Sub-Saharan Africa's Infrastructure Development Index.[27] The country has an estimated 20,000 km of roads, of which about 1% are paved. This also favors that most roads (around 60%) become impassable during the rainy season. As a result, supply chain in South Sudan is extremely expensive, not only for humanitarian operations but also for the private sector. Most of the rural population face serious difficulties or are completely unable to reach markets during most of the year. South Sudan also experiences one of the highest level of attacks against humanitarian actors. Between July and September 2021 there were 174 reported access incidents: a 49 percent increase from the 117 incidents reported during the same period last year.

An estimated 7.24 million people (60% of the population) are likely to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse acute food insecurity, with a total of 108,000 people likely to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) acute food insecurity at the peak of the lean season in GPAA (33,000), Akobo County (11,000) in Jonglei State, Aweil South County (14,000) in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, and Tonj North County (26,000), Tonj east (18,000) and Tonj South (6,000) in Warrap State. During this period, an estimated 2.47 million are likely to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) acute food insecurity.

Facing all these challenges, households often have to use extreme coping strategies including reduced

---

[25] Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) Report
[26] Not only food assistance
[27] https://infrastructureafrica.opendataforafrica.org/rscznob/africa-infrastructure-development-index-aidi

portion sizes, number of meals and food quality, especially the most vulnerable households and groups. The different challenges affecting food availability, affordability and utilization need to be addressed bridging the gap between humanitarian and development interventions, via initiatives that can create synergies between the two dimensions.

Influenced by recurrent humanitarian crises and pervasive food insecurity, nutrition indicators are appalling, e.g. the modelled prevalence of stunting (height-for-age) is estimated at 30.6 in 2020.[28] The major factors contributing to acute and chronic malnutrition include high prevalence of diseases (up to 36%) added to extremely low access to healthcare (1,300 out of 2,300 health facilities are not functional), poor quality and diversity of food (Minimum Acceptable Diet: 7%, Minimum Dietary Diversity: 15%). Elevated levels of food insecurity (IPC AFI Phase 3 and above) in most counties also contribute to acute malnutrition. Furthermore, poor access to drinking water, health and nutrition services due to heightened subnational conflict and flooding mainly in the Greater Upper Nile are also contributing to acute malnutrition. COVID-19 related disruptions, including those implemented to curb coronavirus infection rates, as well as changes in severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) referral protocols for children have exacerbated lack of access to services.

Displacement and Population movements

Humanitarian needs are often linked to population movements, including new and secondary displacements derived from factors such as localized and sub-national conflict, or floods that have affected South Sudan for several years in a row (vulnerability to climate change is being exacerbated[29]) and as of more recently, food insecurity. Recent mapping of displacement[30] yielded a total of 1,710,966 IDPs (that includes 6% previously displaced abroad) and 1,734,329 returnees (that includes 34% from abroad) in 3,038 locations across South Sudan as of December 2020.[31] The negative effects of compounding shocks are disproportionately harder on vulnerable segments such as women and children, who comprise 55.9% and 57%, respectively, of IDPs registered.[32] Considering refugees and asylum seekers, at present there are over 2.3 million South Sudanese in neighboring countries, distributed as follows: Uganda (41%), Sudan (34.3%), Ethiopia (16.5%), Kenya (5.8%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (2.5%).[33] On the other hand South Sudan hosts about 329,406 refugees. Most of them (92%) are Sudanese, whereas Congolese and Ethiopians make 5% and 1% of the refugee population, respectively. Overall, 52% of the refugees are female, while women and children represent 81% of all refugees. The number of asylum-seekers is approximately 4,300 individuals.[34] Most of the refugees are hosted in Upper Nile and the Unity States in South Sudan representing 90.5% of the total population.

---

[28] https://data.unicef.org/country/ssd/

[29] In 2019 South Sudan was the 8th country in the world most affected by climate change (Global Climate Risk Index 2021)

[30] This is unrelated to the number of international migrants in South Sudan, estimated at 865,600 (48% of whom are female and 52% are male). This number comprises humanitarian workers including those who work with the United Nations, international and national non-governmental organizations, embassies, and the business communities. It does not include irregular and/or undocumented migrants. In 2019, the Immigration Department recorded 6,018 international migrants (16% Female and 84% Male), from a total 132 countries with sizeable number from China (20%).

[31] IOM (2021). South Sudan Displacement Tracking Matrix — Mobility Tracking Round 10 Initial Findings.

[32] IOM (2021). Available at http://iomsouthsudan.org/tracking/biometric

[33] UNHCR (2021). Available at https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/62?sv=5&geo=0

[34] UNCHR (October 2021).

Since 2018 more than 387,000 refugees have spontaneously returned to South Sudan. The reported reasons for departing the country of asylum are lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (48%), lack of access to basic services (37%) and insecurity (9%) in their countries of asylum.[35] The reasons for returning to South Sudan are the improvement of security situation in South Sudan (37%), reunification with family members (22%) and improved availability of services in South Sudan (15%).[36] In terms of their future plans, 84% of returnees plan to stay permanently.[37]

One in five IDP women are reported to have been raped during the 2013-18 conflict.[38] Even if sheltered in PoC or IDP sites, women and girls' face risks of violence on a daily basis, living in fear of constant attack from men from in and outside of the camps. Ongoing protection efforts plus gender-sensitive and durable solutions-based approaches to planning for returns and reintegration are required. Efforts are being put in place to support women who have migrated from Sudan to South Sudan by working in partnership with National Transformational Leadership Institute at the University of Juba to mentor the women and girls and create a female-friendly space in which psychosocial support, counseling and trauma-healing services can be provided.

Urban centers in various parts of the country continue to receive and host substantial numbers of displaced people. While figures are scarce, several international aid agencies, as well as the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC), have noted an increase in female-headed households in rural areas as well as a tendency for young male refugees and IDPs to leave their home areas relatively quickly.[39]

Whether they are displaced internally or to other countries, people displaced by violence need life-saving assistance such as:[40]
- Emergency food assistance. IDPs, refugees and returnees are often severely affected by violence, losing food supplies and livelihood assets, and are urgently requesting for emergency food assistance.
- Emergency shelter and non-food items. IDPs, refugees and returnees urgently need shelter materials and NFIs. Many had their shelters destroyed by the attackers and left all their belongings behind as they rushed to leave their homes. Displaced persons and returnees are sheltering in schools, old buildings and some makeshift shelters built with old plastic materials or in grass thatched huts (tukuls).[41] Their vulnerability in such conditions is extreme and can lead to being recruited into militias, prostitution, SEA, etc.

---

[35] UNHCR South Sudan refugee Household Survey Dashboard (July-September 2021):
https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89370
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] https://womenindisplacement.org/reports/country/sd
[39] Migration, Environment and Climate Change: ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE -
https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_environment.pdf
[40] For some specific examples: https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-protection-summary-site-and-villageneighborhood-assessment-%E2%80%94-mobility-tracking?close=true or
https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-shelter-non-food-items-summary-site-and-villageneighborhood-assessment-%E2%80%94?close=true
[41] A household survey conducted between July-September 2021 showed that 54% of refugee returnee households own a house, while 32% of households owning houses do not have access to it. The three main reasons for restricted access are: 1) Houses are destroyed; 2) Houses are damaged; 3) Houses are occupied by others. Source: UNHCR's South Sudan refugee Household Survey Dashboard (July-September 2021): https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89370

- Water access, sanitation and hygiene. People often drink from the nearby contaminated river.
- Access to drinkable water, hygiene and sanitation are critical to avoid disease outbreaks in the collective sites. This risk worsens with the onset of the rainy season, as acute diarrhea outbreaks may arise if the IDPs are unable to access suitable sanitation facilities.
- Healthcare. Healthcare facilities are insufficient and often lack medicines and supplies to treat those who are wounded. As a key indicator, close to a quarter of IDPs and returnees live in settlements located further than 5 km from a functional health facility.[42] Among the people in need, 1.99 million are women of reproductive age requiring reproductive health care. But such services remain limited in scope, coverage and quality. In areas worst hit by the crisis, up to 57% of health facilities are non-functional. Even in the few functional facilities, there are inadequate human resources for health in number and quality. For maternal health care, the country is in shortage of 2,400 midwives. This number continues to grow with population increase. It is estimated that about 2 million people are in need of GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response services. Of these, 90% are female, 35% are children, and 15% are people with disabilities.

It is extremely important to monitor displaced populations in South Sudan and the region; not only to provide them with the urgent humanitarian support they need, but also to preclude human trafficking and prevent further conflict which can fuel a spiral of violence and more displacements – often, people move to areas where they are not welcome, so they have to keep moving. Clashes can easily arise when displaced people return or relocate to other areas for reasons such as land rights, and the numbers are so sizeable that the consequences are also potentially very big: 1,141,339 IDPs returned between 2016 and December 2020 from within South Sudan and 592,990 people returned from abroad in the same period.[43]

The potential return of hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees to various parts of the country will require an appropriate array of services' delivery in particular basic health and social services, integration efforts including peacebuilding, and critically, a legal framework for land tenure and property rights (already a controversial issue countrywide). Processes of claiming land rights may be contested and often highly gender-biased, requiring substantial external support to ensure protection for those most vulnerable in returnees and host communities.[44]

The decision to return is not an end in and of itself,[45] and protracted conflict and repeated displacement have meant that 'place of origin' or 'place of habitual residence' is rarely a singular phenomenon, but one that applies to multiple locations where people are able to seek protection and assistance.[46] Additionally, civilians try to diffuse the risks of return across the family unit, leaving some family members in places of displacement while they undertake temporary journeys to areas of

---

[42] IOM & WHO South Sudan (2021), https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-—-who-dtm-joint-analysis-health-access-idps-and-returnees-march-2021?close=true
[43] IOM (2021). South Sudan Displacement Tracking Matrix — Mobility Tracking Round 10 Initial Findings.
[44] Operational Guidance Note for Humanitarian Support to Returns, Relocations and Local Integration of IDPs in South Sudan (2019)
[45] https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620857/bp-no-simple-solutions-women-displacement-south-sudan-030919-en.pdf;jsessionid=64593FF853657CC17A22A482258E27F3?sequence=1
[46] https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/repository/returns-and-peace-in-south-sudan-challenges-opportunities-and-the-way-forward

habitual residences to check on their properties before attempting to return home.[47] Nobody wants to stay in displacement, especially in conditions that do not even meet minimum emergency standards over seven years after the conflict started. However, the recent history of ethnically targeted violence and displacement echoes painfully in peoples' memories, producing short time horizons with respect to the prospects of truly durable solutions, as do the more contemporary experiences of the same.

Macroeconomic structure

At macroeconomic level, the most relevant feature of South Sudan is its heavy reliance on oil, which represents about 95% of exports and is a fundamental driver of Government's revenue. Such overreliance on oil has traditionally favored another central feature of the economy: corruption in the public finances system. For instance, early 2021 South Sudan was ranked as the most corrupt country in the world.[48] South Sudan's 2019 Open Budget Survey (OBS) transparency index was 7, while public participation at 11, and budget oversight at 43, out of a total 100. Despite marginal improvements compared to 2017 in terms of budget transparency, South Sudan's ranking is 106th out of 117 countries. Corruption is a complex problem that goes beyond stealing public funds (e.g. in the form of political patronage networks), and such structural weaknesses make it very difficult to integrate principles such as gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), etc.

In recent years, the combination of these two features has proven to be a very considerable weakness because of large oil price fluctuations. After the peace agreement was reached, the economic recovery started in 2018/19 (GDP grew by 3.4%) and continued throughout 2019/20 (when GDP growth was estimated at 13.2%). In 2020/21, South Sudan's economy was initially projected to grow very considerably (above 10%), but the COVID-19 pandemic led it to contract by 4.2% in FY20/21[49]. With global oil demand plummeting, the low price of oil led to a large decrease in exports and national revenue. This, added to deficit monetization by the Government, led to a considerable depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound in the parallel market (from about 280 SSP per $1 USD in March 2020 to about 600 SSP per $1 USD in December 2020), as well as an inflation spike, e.g. In December 2020 alone, prices increased by 58%. As of August 2021, the situation has been reverted: the official and the parallel market exchange rates have converged to about 400 SSP per USD, and inflation has stabilized. From July to August, the consumer price index (CPI) increased by 1.8%.

In view of this context, since the second half of 2020 the Government accelerated the implementation of economic reforms to i) increase efficiencies in the management of public finances, and ii) mobilize more non-oil revenue. This included the appointment of new leadership at the National Revenue Authority (NRA) which has greatly enhanced the mobilization of non-oil revenue, and the promotion of non-oil exports such as gold and gum Arabic for economic diversification.

Investments in oil are also being promoted, however, which may grow further as oil prices rise. South Sudan holds sub-Saharan Africa's third largest oil reserves at an estimated 3.5 billion barrels.[50] Current oil output is about 175,000 barrels per day (bpd) and the country is making new oil refineries to expand

---

[47] See for example IOM's Displacement Site Flow Monitoring in Masna Collective Center and Bentiu IDP Camp.
[48] Same rank as Somalia. Transparency International (2021).
[49] IMF (2021). IMF Country Report No. 21/70.
[50] Jayaraj (2021).

operations. This is likely to increase in the future given that 70% of acreage is still unexplored.[51] Trinity Energy Ltd. currently holds 40% of the South Sudanese oil market and is expected to play a major role in its expansion. Last year, Trinity Energy was granted a permit to build a $500 million crude oil refinery plant, which could produce as much as 200,000 bpd and is expected to be completed in 3 years. In February 2021, the Ministry of Petroleum announced that the country is going to start producing 7,000 bpd in the newly renovated Tharjath refinery[52] and in April 2021 the Bentiu Oil Refinery, built at a cost of $100 million, became operational with a target production of 10,000 bpd.[53] Government wants to push current oil production to 190,000 bpd, and thus increase the production by about 20,000 bpd possibly by the end of 2021.[54] In January 2021, South Sudan entered into an agreement with Sudan to increase oil production and resume operations at key oil fields. South Sudan believes this deal will help it achieve a production range of 300,000 bpd within the next three years.[55] Though there is little transparency, the GoSS may have already used future oil resources to secure funding, and therefore it is unclear how much of the oil produced in the future will actually be able to generate revenue (as opposed to simply paying off the loans/investments already made).

With these efforts to develop oil, it remains unclear whether the country will reduce its dependence on it in the medium-term. The main concerns associated with this are: i) the oil sector is intensive in capital (not in labor) which translates in very few jobs for the South Sudanese – sorely needed as per the ongoing youth demands; ii) that it can easily continue fueling corruption – in a setting where public financial management is very weak with regards to transparency and accountability; and iii) that women participation in oil resource management remains the lowest among all other sectors, and hence implications on women in terms of access to opportunities, as well as environmental implications really taken into consideration. Therefore, the country's citizens may not even benefit from the oil revenues *indirectly* (e.g. through the provision of basic services).

During 2020 and 2021, two IMF loans to the tune of USD 52.3 million and USD 174.2 million were approved to help the country cope with balance of payments stress induced by COVID-19. The loans helped the country settle the salary arrears it owed to its civil servants, which had accumulated to about 7 months – as of July 2021, civil servants' salary arrears have been cut to 2-3 months. These two loans were accompanied in September 2021 by an additional allocation of Special Drawing Rights by the IMF to the tune of USD 334 million. In exchange, the country's authorities agreed on macroeconomic policies and reforms and a nine-month Staff-Monitored Program by the IMF (ongoing), which included important decisions such as reforming the foreign exchange market, unifying the official and parallel rates, or making it more difficult to incur in additional commercial debt (which accounts for 84.3% of all the country's debt). There is also a PFM reform strategy, yet to be implemented.

South Sudan outstanding total debt stock amounts to US$ 2.1 billion as of June 2021. The main creditors are Qatar National Bank (USD 651 million), African Exim-Bank (USD 487 million), IMF (USD 227 million), China Exim Bank (USD 150 million), Sahara Energy (USD 137 million), World Bank (USD

---

[51] Jayaraj (2021).
[52] Xinhuanet (2021).
[53] Anyango (2021).
[54] Xinhuanet (2021).
[55] Jayaraj (2021).

81 million) and African Development Bank (USD 18 million). Most loans (87.4% of the countries loans) are commercial, which means that only 12.6% is made up of concessional loans. In the latest debt sustainability analysis of the country (April 2021), the present value of debt-to-GDP ratio was estimated at 28% in FY20/21 and South Sudan's debt is assessed as sustainable but with a high risk of debt distress for both external and overall public debt. Most debt payments, especially those relating to oil are made in actual oil barrels.

Outstanding payments to Sudan included in the 21/22 budget are estimated at USD 613 million. The Transitional Financial Arrangement (TFA) could be cleared by October 2021, which would release more revenue for service delivery. Major priorities of the FY21/22 budget include payment to Sudan, infrastructure, education, security and public administration sectors which together account for nearly 80% of the FY21/22 budget. This generally leaves few resources for social expenditure, e.g. in 2019 South Sudan spent over 11 times more on debt service than on social spending on education, health and social protection combined (13.5% of GDP on debt vs 1.21% on social spending).[56] Financing for sustainable development in South Sudan relies significantly on international aid, especially ODA, of which over USD 1.5 billion have been disbursed annually since the country's independence.[57]

Poverty, Employment, Private Sector and Trade

The weak state of public financial management (e.g. in the form of salary arrears) and macroeconomic indicators (e.g. inflation) are a heavy burden for the South Sudanese, e.g. Inflation contributed to an estimated 1.6 million people sliding into vulnerability, particularly the urban poor who earn South Sudanese Pounds but face prices indexed to USD. These factors add distress to a situation that is structurally very challenging. With a GDP per capita in 2020 of 747.7 USD[58], South Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world: its incidence of extreme poverty in 2016 was estimated at about 76.4% (expected to have deteriorated further since, due to the continuation of violence and shocks in subsequent years).[59] The country's human development index (HDI) in 2020 was 4.333, which placed it as the 4th last in the HD global ranking.[60] Inequality is also very high: the Gini coefficient was 44.1 in 2016.

Poverty is a key driver of gender inequality, and the poverty level jumping from 51% to 76.4% between 2009 and 2016.[61] Women suffer higher poverty rates, which has been made worse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is $1,759 for women, compared to $2,247 for men.[62] In 2019, the *Gender Development Index* (GDI), which measures gender inequalities in achievement in health (measured by female and male life expectancy), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and

---

[56] UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, "Protecting and Transforming Social Spending for Inclusive Recoveries, COVID-19 and the Looming Debt Crisis", April 2021
[57] See section on Financing Landscape
[58] UNdata (2021)
[59] World Development Indicators.
[60] Tied with Burundi. Only Niger, the Central African Republic and Chad score less than South Sudan.
[61] IMF World Economic Outlook Database, October 2020
[62] UNDP, 2020

older) and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita) was 0.842, performing more poorly than the Sub-Saharan African average. [63]

In South Sudan women are the primary breadwinner, with 58% of households headed by women; the rise in female-headed households is caused by men's involvement in the conflict.[64] Despite this reality, in 2019, women (13.2%) had higher unemployment rates than males (10.9%).[65] The country has seen increased participation of women in the labour market, albeit mainly in low-paying, low-skilled, elementary occupations, and the informal economy (e.g., traditional reproductive, household and community care roles). In 2011, women represented 84% of those employed in non-wage work, either for their family (43%), for others (5%) or on their own (37%), and the majority of women (63%) were in the agriculture sector versus in formal salaried employment (13%) or the tertiary sector (19%).[66] It is also notable that women reported having little control over proceeds from income-generating activities.

Households struggle greatly to earn a living, which has negative implications in other areas, such as a reduced probability of hosting IDPs: 54% households interviewed in Juba reported they will have to consider that as a measure due to cost, and 63.9% due to space.[67] This is particularly important keeping in mind that 77% of the IDPs live with host communities and only 23% are in displacement sites.

A vital indicator reflecting households' economic struggle is jobs. About 80% of South Sudanese are rural subsistence farmers.[68] Of those who are not, most (on their own or supported by their family members) are entrepreneurs *by force* (not by choice). Besides subsistence agriculture (relevant even in urban areas) and livestock rearing (for approximately 60% of households), the main activities include little trade (e.g. cell phone recharges, selling non-perishable goods, fruits and vegetables, charcoal, beer or collection of wild grass) and services (e.g. boda-bodas, tea stalls, construction labor, cleaning and laundry). Most of these activities are informal and do not meet the minimum standards of decent work.

Half of all urban households have lost a job activity through conflict, and the majority of the displaced are no longer active in the labor market. Even among households that have not been displaced, nearly half have lost an important job since 2013, often the household's primary activity. Wages have fallen for half of all urban workers, as has time at work, and more workers now report that they would like to work longer hours than before the conflict.

---

[63] Source: UNDP South Sudan Human Development Indicators 2020 http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SSD

[64] Gaby Rojas Pérez, "Conflict in South Sudan: How Does It Affect Women?" Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, (6 May 2014).

[65] Retrieved on 8 August 2021 from: Unemployment, female (% of female labor force) (modeled ILO estimate) - South Sudan | Data (worldbank.org) and Unemployment, male (% of male labor force) (modeled ILO estimate) - South Sudan | Data (worldbank.org)

[66] L. Guarcello S., Lyon F. C. and Rosati (2011) Labour market in South Sudan Country Report December 2011, Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Programme, http://www.ucw-project.org/attachment/30052016798Labour_market_in_South_Sudan.pdf

[67] https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-—-urban-multi-sector-needs-vulnerabilities-and-covid-19-impact-survey-fsnms-—?close=true

[68] USAID (2019)

The informal economy in South Sudan has not been measured, but most of the population it is believed to rely on it, both as consumers and traders. Women rely even more heavily on it, because barriers to education and capital often prevent them from accessing or establishing careers in the formal sector. Furthermore, in a country marked by large-scale displacement, the informal sector has also provided avenues for IDPs to meet their basic needs, particularly when they lose access to farmlands and animals. The informal sector has also become an avenue for child labor, whereby households rely on the income brought in by children to support meeting basic needs. Child labor practices have become heightened, particularly given the ongoing economic crisis, the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, and displacement and separation of households following conflict. This involves selling household items and second-hand clothes on the street, selling fruits and vegetables, washing cars, supporting construction activities, and even joining armed groups, militias or youth gangs. Female-headed households may be forced to adopt extreme coping strategies and involve in immoral such activities as prostitution. Extreme poverty and lack of employment also contribute to social practices such as early and/or forced marriages which have negative implications over physical and mental health of girls, dropping out of school, etc.

In these conditions, many people aspire to get a job in the public sector and many young urban workers still hope to one day work for the government, though few expect such a job soon.[69] Public sector is much less attractive compared to the past, e.g. a mere 15% expect such a job within two years, compared to 60% in 2013.[70] From 2011-2013, civil servants could expect reliable payments of salaries that paid a living wage in accordance with market prices and currency valuation. In addition to the lack of payment of salaries and their low purchasing power due to inflation, other barriers include high turnover of staff (due to high turnover of Ministers and other high-level leaders), and lack of pension schemes' payouts. Even when salaries are paid, they are so low (about 7 USD on average per civil servant) that civil servants must complement it (often seeking bribes, etc.)

Wage work is hard to find (particularly with reliable salaries that adjust for inflation): established businesses (South Sudanese or foreign-owned) and NGOs employ about 72,000 workers in urban areas, mostly in commerce and basic services.[71] South Sudanese owned business employ the highest number of South Sudanese nationals, followed by foreign-owned businesses and NGOs. This means that while NGOs might be an attractive option, businesses provide more job opportunities. Given the asymmetric bargaining power between employee and employer, decent work is far from guaranteed.

Furthermore, a large gender pay gap is believed to exist (there is a lack of methodologies for regular monitoring, e.g. as of December 2020 only 23% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available), with big gaps in areas such as unpaid care and other labor market indicators. It is primordial to know those gender pay gaps to address them.

Challenges in accessing wage work include barriers to formal education, vocational skills and soft skills, which impact disproportionately vulnerable segments such as women or youth. For instance, 90% of

---

[69] World Bank (2020).
[70] World Bank (2020).
[71] World Bank (2020).

youth have no formal employment, being considered "unemployed and unemployable".[72] The 2012 Refugee Act recognizes the right to seek employment by refugees, and they are exempted from processing a work permit application. Overall access to employment by refugees is constrained by the high-level of unemployment in the country, general economic problems, and linguistic and other practical barriers. A relatively small number of refugees have been successful in running small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and some have been employed by humanitarian NGOs.

Those who manage to complete their education at the secondary or tertiary level may also face challenges in finding suitable opportunities in the labor market, due to the ongoing economic crisis. Furthermore, many adults in South Sudan who received their education prior to independence in 2011 were trained in Arabic-medium curriculum, whether in the country or in Sudan, Egypt, etc., which has made them ineligible for skilled jobs in both the private and public sectors (English has been made the official language of the country and there have been no government efforts to assist them transition from Arabic to English).

For other vulnerable segments getting a paid job may also be very difficult. Notably, most people with disabilities are unemployed and there are almost no social safety nets and food security schemes for persons with disabilities. Barriers to employment include the accessibility of the working environment and the attitudes of employers and colleagues towards disabled persons. South Sudan is estimated to have more than 1.2 million people with disabilities.[73] A 2016 household survey found that around 15% of households had at least one disabled family member.[74]

While people may find coping strategies (e.g. charge their cell phones on small generators; use basic cell phones), in the short to medium term, the challenges to be connected beyond households' local community can be daunting. Adding to the very low electricity access already noted, the lack of digital services is overwhelming: e.g. in 2020 only 8 individuals per 100 inhabitants had access to Internet.[75] The main obstacles are the very low coverage of the electricity the grid and mobile network towers (some were destroyed during conflict). In turn, these constraints have knock-on effects that hamper the development of other solutions with the potential to alleviate some of the obstacles for private sector development. For instance, even in neighboring countries such as Kenya the widespread deployment of mobile money has been positive to boost credit for businesses or increase remittances.

Conditions in the private sector for firms, and for entrepreneurs generally, are not easy either: the country ranks 185th (out of 190) as the easiest place to do business.[76] The biggest challenges identified to do business in the country are 'Getting electricity', 'Protecting minority investors', 'Getting credit' and 'Trading across borders'. Due among others to decades of conflict, key selected indicators in these areas are appalling – especially those relating to infrastructure and especially out of Juba. Access to electricity is limited and unreliable: only 6.7% of the country's entire population (13.1% in urban settings) had access to it in 2020[77] which makes it rank as the 166th country in per capita energy

---

[72] https://unmiss.unmissions.org/state-youth-report-launched-shocking-figures-%E2%80%9C-youth-know-what-needs-be-done%E2%80%9D

[73] HRW (2017); Forcier et al. (2016)

[74] WFP (2017), Food Security and Livelihood Cluster in South Sudan

[75] UNdata (2021)

[76] World Bank's Ease of Doing Business (2021).

[77] World Development Indicators.

consumption. Lack of credit is due to a very limited development of the country's financial sector. For instance, in 2017 only 8.6% of the population aged 15+ (4.7% for women) owned an account at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider. Such pattern also has to do with the fact that banks were targeted during the conflict (e.g. some bank branches that were destroyed outside of Juba have not been rebuilt) and as a result, people don't trust that they'll be able to access their money if conflict broke out again.

South Sudan has a road network of over 20,000 kilometers, but only about 1% of those (200 kilometers) are paved.[78] Of the tarmacked/paved roads, 170 kilometers are in urban centers, mostly in Juba. Wau has only 9 kilometers of tarmac, while there is no tarmac in Malakal because the road network was destroyed through conflict in 2013 and 2016.[79] Contamination by explosive ordnance has further hindered road improvement, as construction initiatives strike mines and it is necessary to provide survey/clearance and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), to ensure the roads can be built/expanded safely. Beyond roads, there is a need to provide mine action support to other infrastructure efforts including bridges, construction of buildings, water pipelines and agriculture land.

Road travel being very difficult, especially during the rainy season, it entails very high costs to access markets or basic services (and for humanitarian actors, to reach those in need), which hampers severely the development of the country's agricultural sector despite its fertile soil. Plans to improve the road network have faced challenges, including inadequate government funding, poor internal capacity of professional engineers and planners, difficulty obtaining construction materials (logistics) and severe weather conditions (rain, floods) that impede construction for long periods of time. About 53% of households lack access to markets or do not have access to credit and/or the financial resources needed to invest in farming, livestock and fisheries.

Extremely underdeveloped infrastructure and supply chains also have a macro effect and explains why the country is little integrated into the global economy – even within East Africa. With weak infrastructure and being landlocked, trade is costlier than in other countries as most trade routes are by road, with a small road network often insecure and prone to ambushes that easily turn into important supply-side disruptions (e.g. in the form of strikes by truck drivers). Such little trade integration and meager agricultural development are a very bad combination for the economy when natural shocks hit, which helps explaining why food security crises are easily triggered.

These structural elements relating to the country's needs and barriers to trade are reflected in the country's trade indicators. Notably, the top exports of South Sudan in 2018 were Crude Petroleum ($1.62B), Gold ($47.6M), Forage Crops ($28.8M), Sawn Wood ($6.73M), and Rough Wood ($3.01M).[80] The top imports of South Sudan are Cars ($88.3M), Delivery Trucks ($47.6M), Packaged Medicaments ($35.9M), Other Edible Preparations ($29.6M), and Knit Men's Coats ($14M).[81] South Sudan exported mostly to China ($1.59B), United Arab Emirates ($48.3M), India ($44.4M), Pakistan ($24.2M) and Uganda ($3.19M). South Sudan imported mostly from Uganda ($301M), United Arab Emirates

---

[78] EU project.
[79] Interview with the Undersecretary, Ministry of Roads and Bridges, Government of South Sudan. June 2021
[80] https://oec.world/en/profile/country/ssd/accessed?flowSelector1=flow1
[81] https://oec.world/en/profile/country/ssd/accessed?flowSelector1=flow1

($162M), Kenya ($128M), China ($76.7M), and United States ($21.7M).[82]

The underdeveloped infrastructure, pervasive insecurity and limited government institutional capacity have impacted greatly on data collection and analysis especially population data. This has contributed to weak policy coherence and an absence of evidence-based policymaking. The national statistical system and capacities remain underdeveloped and unable to provide the disaggregated data necessary to inform strategic development interventions across a broad geographic scope.

These challenges are compounded by displacements and insecurity, which inhibits access to farmlands throughout the planting, growing, and harvest periods for many households, particularly for women and children who experience unequal food resource allocations within households.[83] In turn, economic hardship leads to increases in SEA.[84]

Social Protection

The harsh conditions in which the South Sudanese people live make crucial the importance of having a solid social protection system, which in turn highlights the urgent need of creating a State in South Sudan[85] where a 'social contract' (currently missing) can be established. For such social contract to be in place, it is imperative to establish governance systems that promote accountability and transparency, thereby tackling corruption. This is because weak public financial management, added to the over-dependence on oil revenue, make a combination where basic social services can hardly be financed and provided, with funds often used for maintaining the 'political marketplace'. Although a National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) is in place since 2014, there is little national investment into the social protection sector. The annual expenditure on social protection activities is approximately USD $117.6 million. The Government committed to allocating 1% of its annual budget to finance the NSPPF through MGCSW but allocated approximately USD $376,000 in 2018 (about 0.06% of the FY2018–2019 national budget). This represents a tiny proportion of the needed funding, with 99.7% of current annual expenditure on social protection activities in South Sudan provided by donor funding.[86]

Other factors add to the challenge of having a social contract in place: poor policy frameworks, limited financial, human and technical resources as well as coordination challenges. In addition to these, population density is very low (about 20 people per squared kilometer), it is very sparsely distributed (and unreachable due to the lack of infrastructure), which raises the cost of providing basic services per person, greatly hindering the possibility of reaching economies of scale. For example, close to a quarter of IDPs and returnees (around half a million of individuals) live in settlements located further

---

[82] https://oec.world/en/profile/country/ssd/accessed?flowSelector1=flow1

[83] Mawejje,Joseph; Finn,Arden Jeremy.(2020). *South Sudan Economic Update: Poverty and Vulnerability in a Fragile Environment.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Available from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/893571583937198098/pdf/South-Sudan-Economic-Update-Poverty-and-Vulnerability-in-a-Fragile-Environment.pdf Accessed on 05/06/2021.

[84] See Section 3, VAWG

[85] Ebony Center (2021).

[86] UNICEF (2021). "Update of the Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020".

than 5 km from a functional health facility, which increases the risk of poor mother and child health care.[87]

Another obstacle related to claiming access to services is the lack of identification documents. This phenomenon that is aggravated for vulnerable populations, e.g. in IDP sites only 45.3% individuals across Juba Town, 5.9% in Wau, Town, 5.9% in Bentiu Town and 11.9% in Malakal town reported possessing some form of identification document.[88] Relatedly, lack of reliable and accurate data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, etc. further exaggerate the vulnerabilities of vulnerable groups because it is difficult to target them in social protection schemes. The birth registry system needs to be strengthened to ensure proper documentation of the system of social assistance and social protection policies.

Such structural features explain, in addition to other factors such as the high recurrence of humanitarian crises, why civil society (notably NGOs) and humanitarian and development partners have become a very significant *de facto* provider of basic social services throughout the country. Despite their best efforts, however, the capacity of civil society and NGOs to tackle the entire country's challenge is limited, which is best illustrated in two indicators. First, only about 58% of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) could be funded; and second, 8.3 million people have recently been reported as in need of humanitarian assistance.[89] Furthermore, it should be noted that despite the vital importance of expressions such as volunteerism, civil society and NGOs have limited space for civic society engagement, e.g. According to the International Federation of Journalists, South Sudan Journalists are frequently harassed, intimidated, beaten or abducted and sometimes killed, to the point that it is the fourth place as one of the world's worst countries in terms of prosecuting killers of journalists.[90]

Because national systems for the provision of basic social protection are so deficient and partners efforts are insufficient, in recent years there have been initiatives to 'help local communities help themselves', working directly with local communities help them build their own resilience. Building resilience at individual, household and community level helps people to withstand, plan, and better recover from shocks and stresses, reduce levels of vulnerability and build-self-reliance towards development. To build resilience, households must be safe from any sort of violence, conflict or abuse. Then, they must develop a base of income sources, and assets on which they can count when a shock hits them. Farming, livestock, fishing, and other natural resource activities (foraging & collecting wild foods etc.) are the major livelihoods for most rural households, though only about 38% of households possess productive assets.

Health and Wellbeing

Another central pillar of social services is health, of which indicators in South Sudan are extremely inadequate. For instance, life expectancy at birth remains one of the lowest in the world at 56.4 years

---

[87] IOM & WHO South Sudan (2021), https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-—-who-dtm-joint-analysis-health-access-idps-and-returnees-march-2021?close=true
[88] IOM DTM Household Survey.
[89] United Nations Security Council (2021).
[90] https://eyeradio.org/s-sudan-fourth-most-dangerous-country-for-journalists-in-2021/

in 2019 for men and 59.4 for women, although it has slowly improved since 2011 when it was 54 years for men and 56.6 years for women.[91] This is highly influenced by mortality rates, which are particularly dire even for Sub-Saharan Africa standards, e.g. the maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births is 789 (the highest in the world), compared to the 455 in the East Africa region.[92] Neonatal mortality is estimated to be 38.6/1,000 as compared East Africa at 24/1,000 and 27/100 for Sub-Saharan Africa. Under five mortality rate is at 96.2/1,000 compared to sub-Saharan Africa 76/100 and East and southern Africa at 55/1,000.[93] The fertility rate remains very high at 4.6 births per woman in 2019, although it has slowly decreased from 5.3 in 2011.[94]

Access to contraceptives, maternal healthcare and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services depend on local norms and beliefs. Many women in South Sudan are not aware of the importance of antenatal check-ups or family planning options and clinic visits are contingent upon the decision of the male head in the home.[95] Delivery of SRH services to women needs to become more gender-sensitive, ensuring that they are better targeted to priority groups, particularly young women and adolescent girls, and are available, accessible, affordable and of good quality.

Poor health indicators are due to several factors. First, about 44% of households reported that at least one family member experienced physical, mental, or physiological disabilities due to long-lasting effects of conflict in the country. A second factor is the country's very weak and underfunded healthcare system, far below the 15% of the Abuja Declaration.[96] This means that most of the states/administrative areas (AA) do not reach the medicines' availability target (10/13) and experience stockout. It also means that South Sudan does not reach its target of 10 healthcare workers per 10,000 population even though the target was below the recommended minimum standard of 23 healthcare workers per 10,000. In addition to that, there is inadequate training of human resources for health. The gaps in human resources for the health sector capacity include physicians (1 per 65,574 population) and midwives (1 per 39,088 population).[97] Thus, the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel in 2020 was only 19%.[98] Comprehensive and basic emergency obstetric care services are limited, with up to 57% of health facilities non-functional in most conflict-affected areas of the country. Moreover, only 17% of women had four antenatal check-ups, and a majority of women (87%) delivered their babies at home. In addition, family planning uptake is low with contraceptive prevalence rates as low as 4.5% for all methods and 1.7% for modern methods, and unmet need for modern contraceptives is high at 29.7%.

Salary arrears to health workers also contribute and can cause severe disruptions. In August 2021 staff at the Juba Teaching Hospital went on strike, demanding unpaid allowances. These factors compounded by a very low population density and a highly sparsely distributed population, which lead to very few people living close to a health center (although health centers are generally under-

---

[91] World Development Indicators.
[92] UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation https://childmortality.org/data/World
[93] https://childmortality.org/data/South%20Sudan
[94] World Development Indicators.
[95] https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/research/summaries/africa/south-sudan/health [accessed 15.12.20]
[96] External sources of funding contribute the largest share of the total health expenditure, with high expenditures on health compared to less than 10% recommended by WHO for most countries to prevent catastrophic health expenditure.
[97] WHO (2021). Global Health Workforce Alliance.
[98] UNICEF https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer

resourced). Malnutrition (in turn influenced by recurrent humanitarian crises and pervasive food insecurity) also plays a key role. In 2020 stunting was estimated nationally at 15.1 percent and severe stunting at 3.9 percent.[99]

The few resources available in the country's healthcare sector have been strained to the extreme over the years, due to crises of devastating diseases such as malaria, Ebola, Polio or HIV/AIDS. For instance, there has been a marked increase in the trend of confirmed Malaria cases, but with inadequate response from the malaria program which is mainly funded by external resources. HIV remains a major challenge, as the country is far-off from reaching the global targets of reduction of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths: less than 5% of reduction against the target of 75% reduction from the level of 2010. In terms of knowing HIV status, access to treatment and viral suppression, the country is also lagging far behind from the global target of 90%, with only 29% knowing HIV status, 23% accessing treatment and 20% achieved viral suppression. There were approximately 180,000 people living with HIV by the end of 2020, posing considerable burden on the fragile health system, while the prevalence of HIV among adults aged 15-49 was 2.3%.[100] HIV prevalence among young women aged 15–24 (1.3%) is double that of young men (0.6%). HIV is significantly higher among female sex workers (estimated in 2019 at 13.6% and 6.7% in Yambio and Wau, respectively).[101] The HIV prevalence among men having sex with men is not known, though it is supposed to be high. GBV also increases women's risk of HIV infection and hinders women's uptake of HIV testing, care and treatment.[102]

Coverage of Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ARTs) was only 23% in 2020, though it improved relative to 2019 (18%). There are more than 42,000 people on treatment, showing a reasonable growth relative to 34,000 in 2019. However, initiation and retention on HIV treatment continues to be a significant challenge with more than 30% PLHIV on treatment are lost to follow up annually. To address retention and prevent loss of patients currently on treatment, Multi Month Distribution (MMD) of ARVs has been implemented in 36 sites throughout the country. The treatment coverage of HIV positive pregnant women is also very low in the country (44% in 2020). The National HIV/AIDS policy has been partially implemented but the provision of ART, Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) and protective equipment is still lagging behind due to limited funding, poor infrastructures/roads to reach remote areas, stigma, myths, beliefs and misconceptions about HIV, which constrain community engagement initiatives. Other factors are language barriers, illiteracy, low uptake and use of condoms, and poor media coverage for education programs.[103]

While there is limited data, it has been estimated that about 53% of South Sudanese, both males and females (young as well as older) experience some form of mental health-related problem.[104] Notably, there is widespread post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a consequence of civil war, physical and psychological trauma, forced and unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), stigma and ostracization owing to negative societal perceptions of being a rape survivor or suspicion of being

---

[99] FSNM June 2020. Available at
https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsnms_r25_final_report_25_june_2020.pdf
[100] WHO https://www.who.int/data/gho/data
[101] MoH and UNAIDS (2020). HIV Estimates and Projections.
[102] UNAIDS https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/ accessed 5th July 2021
[103] Republic of South Sudan (2015). South Sudan AIDS Commission and Ministry of Health pg 42.
[104] USAID (2019). South Sudan Trauma Assessment Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations. Available from
PA00WBJJ.pdf (usaid.gov) Accessed on 20/07/2021

infected with HIV. In 2018 it was estimated that 26% of adolescent girls in South Sudan are reported to have considered suicide.[105] Studies have shown more adolescents and youth, particularly female aged 14–30 committed suicide because of forced marriages, rejection/denial of pregnancy by a perpetrator, isolation and economic hardship.[106] Although males and females experience similar levels of trauma, there is some evidence that women more easily embrace positive coping mechanisms, such as joining women's groups, getting involved in the church and praying, finding jobs to support the family or even deciding to 'let it go/forgive' for the sake of their children.[107] Yet, it uncertain whether women and girls have safe spaces and quality time to actually discuss their internal issues or rather just draw strength from being in the community. Several initiatives, such as women and girls' friendly spaces have been launched, but a nationwide effort to scale up gender-sensitive mental health care, psychosocial support and trauma counseling is still required.[108]

These diseases, as well as other many others that affect the South Sudanese, were topped with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which strained all health sector indicators even more. When the pandemic reached the country, South Sudan was ranked as the riskiest country for the spread of COVID-19 in Africa[109] and forecasts of deaths ranged from 408 to 26,740 in one year.[110] From January 2020 to 1st July 2021, there were 11,207 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country and 120 deaths.[111] While those numbers are not as high as in other countries, the country could only access 60,000 vaccines donated by the African Union (AU) which expired before they could be used, and 132,000 doses through the COVAX facility (for a population of about 13.72 million people). In fact, the healthcare system capacity is so low that only 57,678 vaccine doses were administered as of 15th July 2021.[112] The AU-donated batch expired, and of the COVAX batch 72,000 doses were turned away to Kenya before they would expire.

There is no national health insurance scheme which covers refugees. However, refugees are included in the national health programs when it comes to vaccination, tuberculosis testing and treatment, HIV testing and or ARTs. Urban refugees and asylum-seekers have also access to primary health care services through the government health system, which is free of charge for outpatient consultations and with a marginal fee for other services that may vary across the country.

Human Capital, Education and Training

Like other social indicators, education indicators in South Sudan are dismal. The country has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world at 27% of the adult population (15% for women).[113] This is very deficient even considering the youth of 15 to 24 years old: 47.9% of them are literate –

---

[105] Plan International (2018): Adolescent Girls in Crisis – Voices from South Sudan
[106] UNICEF Situation of Children and Women (2021); NTLI- University of Juba GBV Training in Ruweng Administrative Area (RAA) 16th May 2021; Government of South Sudan, The South Sudan State of Adolescents and Youth Report 2019, 2020
[107] Source: feedback given by women at training conduction by NTLI, University of Juba.
[108] USAID (2019) (Ibid)
[109] Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2020)
[110] United Nations South Sudan (2020). "UN Socio-Economic Response Plan to COVID-19 in South Sudan".
[111] Likely to be higher due to under-testing and under-reporting, among others. WHO.
https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ss
[112] Contributing to this may also be people's lack of will to get vaccinated; no official data was collected on this. WHO.
https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ss
[113] Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2019.

although the gender difference in that segment is reduced (47.4% of women compared to 48.4% of men).[114] Such indicators are rooted in the many challenges which the education sector faces. The teaching force is composed of few permanent, few female and few qualified staff (table 1) which translates in a high ratio of students per teacher.[115] Thus, South Sudan finds itself caught in a vicious circle of poor quality of human resources, leading to a large number of out-of-school-children, which leads to low quality of education.

Improving access and retention in primary education is a priority throughout the country due to the large number of primary-age children who are out of school and the low intake rate for 6-year old. To achieve this enrolment target, the additional teaching staff required is projected to be 500 early childhood development education (ECDE); 23,000 primary; and 300 secondary teachers; as well as 2,300 Alternate Education System (AES) facilitators (of which 1,000 would be full-time). However, not only is increasing the numbers of teachers insufficient but also improving the quality of teacher education goes a long way to improve learning achievements and the efficiency of the system through contributing to a decrease in dropout and repetition rates. Improved teaching would lead to an increased percentage of learners who successfully complete primary education and transit into secondary education and TVET, which is critical to the country's longer-term development objectives.

Table 1. Percentage of Qualified Teachers in South Sudan

Level	Total	Trained		Untrained		Unknown status	
		Count	% of total	Count	% of total	Count	% of total
AES	4,793	896	18.7%	3,616	75.4%	281	5.9%
PPR [ECD]	2,910	607	20.9%	2,076	71.3%	227	7.8%
PRI	40,822	7,149	17.5%	30,371	74.4%	3,302	8.1%
SEC	4,006	2,081	51.9%	1,599	39.9%	326	8.2%
TTI	29	29	100%	-	-	-	-
TVET	119	56	47.1%	58	48.7%	5	4.2%
UNI	800	800	100%	-	-	-	-
Total	53,479	11,618	21.7%	37,720	70.5%	4,141	7.8%

Source: MOGEI EMIS, 2019

To provide the targeted numbers of teachers, a comprehensive system of pre-service and in-service training is necessary. Also, there must be an accompanying comprehensive short/medium/long term teacher training approach that reflects the need and can meet expectations. The institutions to provide the pre-service training are the seven Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) set up by the government[116] and 20[117] county education centers (CECs). However, due to the security and financial situation in the country, only three of them are partially operational.[118] The TTIs are complemented by three NGOs that were vetted and certified by the national Teacher Development Management System to offer teacher education and training services in the country.

---

[114] World Development Indicators.
[115] Consultation with Ministry of General Education and Instruction of South Sudan in February 2019.
[116] The 7 TTIs are in Maridi, Rumbek, Mbili, Malakal, Maper, Rambur and Arapi
[117] Government was only able to provide names of 16 CECs but mentioned they are 20 Government owned CECs in total.
[118] Work within these operational centres is ad-hoc and project-based, non-sustainable and/or fragmented

High turnover of teaching staff and lack of consistent salaries also affect teachers' motivation severely[119]: at the time of writing there are about two months of salary arrears.[120] As a result, the education quality is far from adequate.[121] The national pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary education is 47[122] though in many states, especially in urban schools, it can go up to 100. In turn, this has a repercussion in the form of very low school attendance. For example, in 2018 net school enrollment in primary education was 42.3%, while in secondary education it was only 3.1%.[123] Low attendance is not only due to the lack of motivated teachers, though. On the demand side, households' hardship is also important: children have to contribute to their livelihood, which was aggravated by the measures to contain COVID-19 (e.g. mobility restrictions, etc.)

High turnover of teaching staff and lack of consistent salaries may also affect teachers' motivation severely[124]: at the time of writing there are about two months of salary arrears.[125] As a result, the education quality is far from adequate.[126] The national pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary education is 47[127] though in many states, especially in urban schools, it can go up to 100. In turn, this has a repercussion in the form of very low school attendance. The following table, extracted from the 2020 out of school children mapping, illustrates the scale of non-attendance which can contribute to children being categorized as out of school. Low attendance is not only due to the lack of motivated teachers. On the demand side, households' hardship is also a key factor: children have to contribute to their livelihood, which was aggravated by the measures to contain COVID-19 (e.g. mobility restrictions).

Attendance (failure to attend 80% of lessons)

State	Number failing to attend 80% of instruction days	Total Enrolment	Percent of enrolled failing to attend 80% of instructions days
Latjor	10,050	36,898	27%
Aweil	17,501	74,118	24%
Maiwut	1,036	5,204	20%
Bieh	2,526	13,279	19%
Gok	2,248	11,944	19%
Fashoda	1,165	7,691	15%
Eastern Lakes	9,003	62,114	14%
Northern Upper Nile	3,625	28,957	13%
Abyei AA	229	2,130	11%
Aweil East	1,299	11,368	11%

---

[119] Although some donors have been providing incentives for teachers.

[120] Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP), Government of the Republic of South Sudan and UNICEF South Sudan. The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020. United Nations Children's Fund, Juba. July 2021

[121] Ibid.

[122] World Development Indicators.

[123] UNESCO

[124] Although some donors have been providing incentives for teachers.

[125] Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP), Government of the Republic of South Sudan and UNICEF South Sudan. The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020. United Nations Children's Fund, Juba. July 2021

[126] Ibid.

[127] World Development Indicators.

Part of the problem is the late enrolment of children into school. In 2018 net school enrollment in primary education was 42.3%, while in secondary education it was only 3.1%.[128] Moreover, even the gross enrolment rates are significantly low, as shown in the trends in the table below:

	Year	GER	NER	GIR	NIR
Primary	2018	61.80%	42.30%	13.10%	0.60%
	2013	61.90%	41.50%	68.00%	11.90%
	2012	63.60%	42.10%	65.90%	9.80%
Secondary	2018	7.90%	3.50%	6.60%	0.30%
	2013	5.10%	1.90%	5.70%	0.40%
	2012	6.60%	2.50%	6.60%	0.80%

As in other areas, girls' education is not prioritized within the family unit, which makes girls greatly disadvantaged relative to boys, especially in secondary education. The reasons include child marriages, patriarchal norms, poor menstrual health management support or teenage pregnancies, among others. The situation is further compounded with limited comprehensive health and sexuality education for in and out of school youth. Marginalized groups including children in pastoralist communities, hard to reach areas and persons with disabilities are least likely to access basic education. In 2020, the proportion of women aged 20-49 years who were married or in a union before age 18 was 45%.[129] the gender parity index relating to gross school enrollment in primary and secondary in 2015 were 0.71 and 0.54, respectively. [130]

The lack of safe, clean, equitable WASH facilities in schools is also a critical issue, especially for girls who suffer from a lack of menstrual health and hygiene support.[131] Other issues affecting the education sector include a lack of available secondary schools and pre-primary schools; poor infrastructure including schools that were destroyed in the conflict; and occupation of schools by armed forces and armed groups: 30% of schools are damaged, destroyed, occupied, or closed.[132]

There are 2.5 million children out of school in South Sudan[133], often because the costs associated with keeping children in school can be prohibitive and contribute to limited educational access. Educationally disadvantaged children include girls at risk of child marriage, children with disabilities, children in rural areas, those displaced by conflict, children who are overage for their grade level, child laborers, children in street situations and pastoralist children (many children fit into at least one of the at-risk profiles and suffer from overlapping deprivations).[134]

While overage children for their grade level and needs to engage in income generation is one of the key factors of school dropout, lack of adequate Technical and Vocational Education and Training

---

[128] UNESCO
[129] UNFPA (2021). https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard
[130] World Development Indicators.
[131] MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020
[132] Ibid
[133] MoGEI, Preliminary Report: Nationwide Out of School Children Catchment Mapping in South Sudan, May 2020 quoted in MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020
[134] MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020

(TVET) is another challenge that could offer need based vocational education to children and youth above 14 years. In 2015, there were reportedly between 26[135] and 33[136] TVT centers (government and non-government) and six secondary TVET schools. Among them, 23 TVET centers/schools under the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Youth and Sports; of which only ten are operational and the rest were destroyed due to the conflict and lack of resources to renovate and make them operational after the war in 2016.[137] The situation of higher education opportunity is even worst.[138] There are only 8,199 learners (1,867 or 23% of which are female) were enrolled in universities. There are five polytechnics but none of them is operational.

In 2019 and 2020, the MoGEI was unable to conduct Annual Education Census which is a valuable source for data on the education sector.[139] This was attributed to school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and stronger financial constraints in the form of reduced budget allocations. The situation was exacerbated for IDPs in camps, flood-affected areas and returnees. Some implementing partners opted to undertake parallel rapid needs assessments of education but overall, there is little recent data to inform planning and decision making.

While refugees in South Sudan still face limitations in access to education, the country has seen improvements in the last few years particularly in the enrolment of refugee children. Data gathered from the Refugees Education Management Information System (REMIS) indicated that 78% of primary school age children are enrolled to primary education whereas some 37% of high-school age children are enrolled in secondary level. The enrollment of tertiary level students is a meagre 2% percent.

Information and Communication

Adding to low educational levels, information (e.g. in the form of media) is scarce, which can favour harmful practices. South Sudan has weak communication infrastructure and channels: radio has the largest coverage but with over 60 languages spoken across the country, it also has limitations. In some areas in the country populations are cut off from all forms of media channels and hence interpersonal traditional communication is the only way to share information and sensitize and promote the rights of vulnerable groups at the community level. Traditional communication channels include theatre, traditional drama, 'mobile milking' and emergency symbols (e.g. smoke). Key community platforms for community engagement are religious institutions (churches and mosques), community structures (elders, CBOs, TBAs), security and humanitarian communication channels and mechanisms.

Poor access to accurate and timely information and a lack of sustained community engagement contribute to the lack of institutional community engagement mechanisms, and to leaving vulnerable groups such as children to multiple diseases, harmful cultural practices or rights violations. To address this hindrance, partnerships with community-based organizations, radio stations, and faith leaders are pursued to raise awareness and mobilize communities for the rights of vulnerable groups. For

---

135 MoGEI 2017
136 UNESCO 2017
137 TVET Rapid Assessment, UNESCO 2018
138 MoGEI 2018. National Education Census Booklet
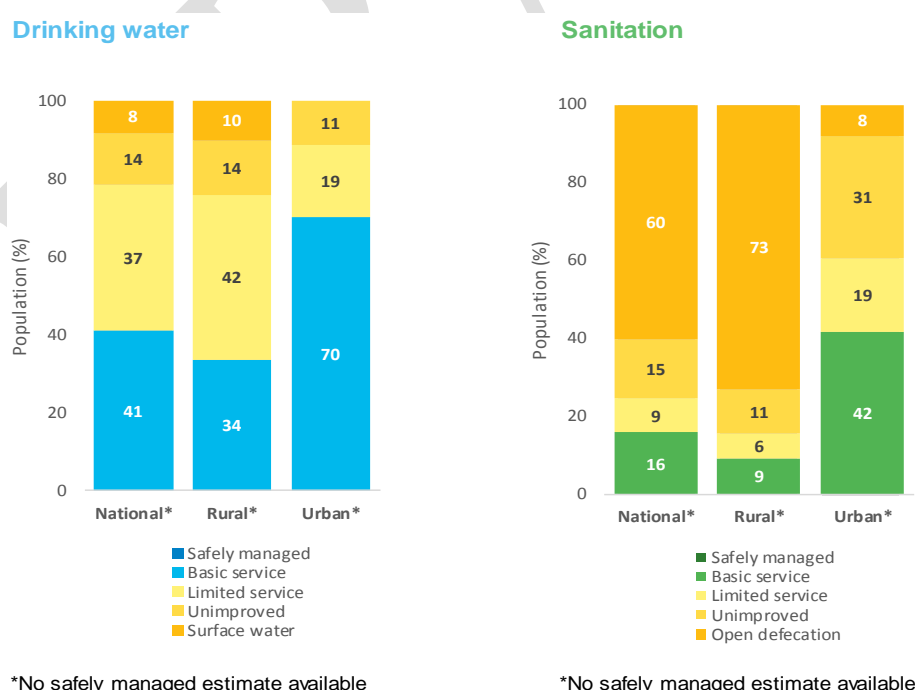139 The Annual Education Census (AEC) was conducted in 2021.

instance, community and social mobilization initiatives such as the Integrated Community Mobilization Network (ICMN), Community Nutrition Volunteers, mother support groups and the Boma Health Initiative are means to engage with communities and promote life-saving messages on health, nutrition, education, child protection, or WASH.

Adding to such fundamental challenges, there is considerable room for improving freedom of expression.[140] According to the International Federation of Journalists, South Sudan Journalists are frequently harassed, intimidated, beaten or abducted and sometimes killed, to the point that it is the fourth place as one of the world's worst countries in terms of prosecuting killers of journalists.[141]

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Water, sanitation and hygiene indicators in South Sudan are very poor (Figure 2 below), especially for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, women or the elderly.[142] This has a very negative impact on health, school attendance and employment, which has severe economic and social long-term consequences for the country. Only 41% of the population has an improved water source within 30 minutes round trip collection time (35% rural; 65% urban); and just 16% of the population has access to a private improved sanitation facility (9% rural, 42% urban)[143]. This has very tangible effects, e.g. prevalence of diarrheal diseases due to lack of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene remains one of the main causes of death for children under five years of age.[144]

Figure 2.

*No safely managed estimate available

*No safely managed estimate available

---

[140] https://ifex.org/relentless-assault-on-press-freedom-continues-in-south-sudan/

[141] https://eyeradio.org/s-sudan-fourth-most-dangerous-country-for-journalists-in-2021/

[142] MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020

[143] WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) 2019 quoted in MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020

[144] UNICEF (2021)

Advances in sanitation and hygiene are primarily dependent on behavioral change. In some areas of South Sudan, such as Western Equatoria, the social norm is for people to have (and subsequently use) toilets in their compound. However, for the most part, there is no social taboo against defecating in the open. Hand washing with soap in not a common practice, however there is no data available at a national level on the understanding or uptake.

At the current rate of progress, it would take 60 years for the whole country to become open defecation free. And with a change of only 0.3% in the past six years for safely managed sanitation, it will take millennia to reach the whole population as less than 1% currently have piped sewage. At the current rate (without counting potential slippage from natural disasters, conflict or lack of maintenance) the entire population will have access to improved water in 2032, but this is only the SDG water supply indicator. The SDG indicator is beyond measure at this point as only 2.6% have access to water on premises and there is no data on safely managed water supply. The rate of improvement needs to change dramatically if the population, especially the most vulnerable, are to be provided with the most basic health services, WASH.

Beyond sanitation, water infrastructure is extremely deficient. Unlike basic sanitation infrastructure, which depends on investments at a household level, basic water supply requires capital investments beyond even community means. South Sudan has inherent advantages for the provision of safe water to the population. Large areas of the country have access to surface water, which, if treated, can provide affordable safe water. Groundwater is generally safe from chemical contamination, and solar pumping can allow for sustainable water supply.

Infrastructure investment is challenged in South Sudan not only because of the large capital required, but also because of logistical and transportation challenges due to frequent flooding as well as the high cost of importing materials. Government has not been allocating budget for capital expenditure for the last six years has no funds for it, and given the weak public financial systems, the international community is rather reluctant to contribute to it using the country's public finance system.

The impact of droughts and floods, linked to the effects of climate change, are impacting on the gains made in expanding WASH infrastructure. This is aggravated by displacements of population because of subnational violence. Increased displacement places an extra burden on existing WASH infrastructure in displacement sites and puts a strain on scarce resources for the operation and maintenance of WASH services.[145]

Limited access to clean water and sanitation services contribute to high prevalence of malnutrition, water-borne diseases, poor menstrual hygiene management, risk of SGBV at water points, absenteeism from school and school dropout.[146] Women and girls have specific WASH risks and needs, for example, they may face increased risk of GBV when collecting water and using communal latrines: in 2020 more than 20% of people using water facilities reported safety concerns, including violence

---

[145] MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020
[146] MoGEI, Preliminary Report: Nationwide Out of School Children Catchment Mapping in South Sudan, May 2020

and discrimination, particularly in IDP sites and other crowded settlements.[147] A stronger framework to support women's participation in the WASH sector is needed. Persons with disabilities may face barriers due to inaccessible hand washing stations, inaccessible latrines and bathrooms and long distances to water points. Ninety per cent of returnees and 89.7% of IDPs live in settlements without segregated latrines, particularly in rural areas.

Environment

South Sudan is well endowed with diverse natural forests and woodlands, which account for about 30% of its total surface.[148] However, environmental assets have been seriously degraded by the prolonged conflict affecting the country. In addition to that, the country is growing more vulnerable to climate change: South Sudan is ranked 7th globally in children's exposure to climate change, environmental shocks and ability to respond.[149] In 2019, South Sudan was the 8th country in the world most affected by climate change that year, while its rank in the previous 20 years was 100th.[150] An estimated 95% of the population is dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods.[151] Growing vulnerability to climate change also has indirect but strong implications for peace and security. Several transmission mechanisms have been identified:[152]

- Flooding and droughts significantly disrupt livelihood patterns and food-security and may result in temporary displacement or longer-term migration. Such shocks exacerbate vulnerabilities and weaken the resilience and adaptive capacity of agriculture-dependent communities; these can heighten competition over natural resources, even leading to cattle raiding and communal conflict.
- Unpredictable annual variation and extreme weather events, like flooding and droughts, affect pastoralist mobility patterns and routes, and farmers' agricultural production. These changes may exacerbate tensions between herders and farmers, often in connection with land, grazing, water and communal conflicts.
- Female-headed households are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as most depend on agriculture to sustain their families, and rely on natural resources like firewood and water.
- Climate-related livestock losses compound ongoing rivalries, increasing the risk of cattle raiding, which can trigger retaliations, communal conflicts, displacement and the growth of new or existing armed groups.

Another fundamental challenge is that mining the country's natural resources can impact the environment very adversely.[153] Until that is fixed, there is enormous pressure on natural resources, especially on the forests, because over 99% of the population of South Sudan depends on forests as

---

[147] UNDP and University of Juba (UoJ) (2020). Gender and Socio-Economic Impact Study of COVID- 19 pandemic. UNDP: Juba, South Sudan. Available from
https://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/library/democratic_governance/gender-impact-assessment-covid19-pandemic-juba-south-sudan.html
[148] UN Environment (2021)
[149] UNICEF Child Climate Risk Index Report 2021
[150] Global Climate Risk Index (2021)
[151]Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Resilient Livelihoods in South Sudan
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ACFrOgBWM82olpF6lR6tLIUp3IDegngAKIBstKqL-f8ftZhp4hwyL1qkbXsdF8o_pLU137ughr31fhdKKik3M2crdD1qjuYgvyiHvlgMnmQq92nAp3idNsCjJTUV8U8%3D.pdf
[152] NUPI and SIPRI (2021).
[153] UN Environment (2018)

their source of energy – fuel wood and charcoal, and timber for construction and furniture.[154]

Driven by very weak governance and management of natural resources, wide availability of weapons and high food insecurity, environmental degradation has taken several forms such as poaching. For instance, in 2020 there were 61 species threatened, up from 42 in 2015 which shows a very worrying increase of 45.2% in just five years.[155] Loss of habitat and deforestation are also related to the loss of biodiversity and can be associated with illegal timber trading or charcoal production.

A significant element contributing to pollution has been rapid, unregulated and ad-hoc urbanization[156], leading to an ongoing expansion and proliferation of informal settlements in the country. Estimates suggest that after the CPA, Juba's population tripled to 750,000 in five years.[157] Between 2005 and 2009 Juba's built-up area expanded by more than four times, largely through the proliferation of informal settlements on land outside its administrative boundaries. This is further compounded by an absence of urban planning tools and processes across the country. For example, Juba is the only city/town with a city master plan, which is not easily available and accessible for planning. Some towns continue to use by-laws which were inherited from the Northern government (Sudan), some of which are in Arabic and therefore difficult to interpret.[158] Given this situation, and the pressure for cities and towns to receive and host refugees, IDPs and returnees for extended periods of time, there is increased need to ensure that the cities are inclusive, safe, with resilient systems and sustainable communities.

Another factor contributing to pollution is the fact that the lack of, as well as the weak enforcement of, environmental standards and guidelines to safeguard the exploration and exploitation in the extractive industry has led to pollution in the oil fields and in the surrounding areas. This trend needs to be checked through the formulation of environmental policies, standards and guidelines, and enforcement of these instruments.

Considering deforestation there are case studies that reveal the extensive conversion of forest and woodlands to grasslands, pasture and rainfed agriculture.[159] While there appears to be a wide divergence in the estimates of forest cover loss, some studies suggest an annual linear deforestation rate of about 2% and a total of 40% loss between 1973 and 2005.[160] This would be one of the highest in the world, and If sustained, it would lead to complete forest loss within 50 years.[161] The main reasons for deforestation are fuelwood collection, charcoal production, farming, livestock, and the construction industry. Hence, there is also an urgent need to introduce and implement effective forest-related programs, policies and legislation in the country.[162] As women are responsible for most household tasks such as fetching water, fire-wood, and foraging food, the impact of deforestation puts them at further risk of health and protection vulnerabilities.

---

[154] UN Environment (2018)
[155] UNdata (2021)
[156] Pritchard, M. 2017. Disputing Access, Discouraging Returns. The South Sudan Law Society, Juba, South Sudan
[157] Martin E, and I. Mosel. 2011. City limits: urbanization and vulnerability in Sudan. Juba case study. Overseas Development Institute, London, UK
[158] Interview with Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, South Sudan. June, 2021
[159] UN Environment (2018)
[160] UN Environment (2018)
[161] UN Environment (2021)
[162] UN Environment (2021)

Though it is evident that climate change affects women and men differently, incorporating gender considerations in climate change mitigation has been slow. Women play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, as they have the knowledge and understanding of what is needed to adapt to changing environmental conditions and to come up with practical solutions. But they are still a largely untapped resource. Restricted land rights, lack of access to financial resources, training and technology, and limited access to political decision-making spheres often prevent them from playing a full role in tackling climate change and other environmental challenges. Recognizing the important contributions of women as decision makers, stakeholders, educators, carers and experts across sectors and at all levels, has proven to be a success to long-term solutions to climate change mitigation.

Interlinkages between sustainable development dimensions

The context in South Sudan shows many interlinkages between the different dimensions of sustainable development. One key option is to consider the economic-social-environment dimensions that are the three pillars of the 2030 Agenda. As an example of such interlinkages, nutrition reflects the close interrelationships with education, gender, supply chains and food security systems, waste management, and nutrition counseling support, etc. As another example, desertification puts more pressure on grazing pastures and aggravates the traditional social divide between pastoralists and farmers – who struggle further to make a living. In fact, frictions seem to have aggravated since the country's independence for several reasons: first, because climate change and desertification push shepherds further south where farmers are; and second, because the institutions to address the rising tensions are not working (or inexistent). Customary institutions put in place for conflict management have slowly lost importance on the back of decades of armed conflict – if in doubt, when violence is widespread it may be easier to embrace violence as well. This has broadly been referred to as a 'vicious cycle of crisis, conflict, climate change, unemployment and decent work deficits'.[163]

It is also important to be cognizant of the interlinkages between the several dimensions of sustainable development and the several layers of vulnerability that can accumulate on the side of beneficiaries. For example, women who have a psychological disability and are young, poor, not educated and victims of any kind of violence should definitely be a top priority when providing humanitarian assistance in the face of a drought. However, they will also be the most vulnerable when the next drought hits. Therefore, efforts must be focused on building solutions that pose no inter-temporal tradeoff for available resources (i.e. all resources go into the short term so there is never a long term view), such as a social security system that can cater for those who accumulate such vulnerability markers. Similarly, Government leadership is needed to coordinate policies and ensure the donor support is better targeted between structural agriculture development interventions and short-term humanitarian aid. This is particularly important given the reluctance of donors to involve the GoSS due to the lack of effective PFM systems and corruption that has depleted the trust of the population and the donor community in the government's ability to effectively perform such a role.

---

[163] ILO and DPPA (2021).

3. The Triple Nexus Peace-Humanitarian-Development

The challenges for building lasting peace and for longer-term development towards achieving the 2030 Agenda remain immense and the opportunities modest in view the continued highly volatile situation of the country. With three quarters of the population in dire need of humanitarian assistance and protection, and with close to a third of the population being displaced, refugees or returnees, lifesaving humanitarian aid remains the dominant aid tool since independence and following decades of war.

The nexus approach focuses on strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace interventions. The aim is transversal to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict. South Sudan reflects these HDP interlinkages in multidimensional and mutually exacerbating ways. For examples, climate change has clear connections with peace and security, putting pressure on livelihoods, rivalries or gender. Extreme poverty, added to lack of employment prospects, exclusion from decision-making processes and availability of military-grade weapons are a combination that leads to general frustration of society and fuels violence at local level, especially by young men. In turn, such violence hinders or prevents the delivery of humanitarian assistance and precludes investments for the longer term, such as going to school or building roads. Simultaneously, this complicates the delivery of humanitarian assistance and perennates it.

The triple nexus has been operationalized by development stakeholders via initiatives such as Collective Outcomes, which align outcomes of the UNCF 2019-2021 and the 2021 HRP, the South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF), access to the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund, or the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR).

The RSRTF has $45 million programmed in HDP Nexus initiatives across the country and its area-based approach is developing state-of-the-art methods for working across the HDP nexus, both at decentralized level and in Juba, as it brings together partners from across the Nexus in program design, implementation and learning efforts. This is possible because the RSRTF is governed by a Steering Committee with members from across the UN and non-UN HDP spectrum.

The PfRR brings together government, UN Agencies, UNMISS, NGOs and donors to advocate and implement programs with the view to reduce vulnerability, build resilience and support new ways of working in Yambio, Torit, Aweil and Wau. The Partnership currently operates across four distinct yet interlinked work streams: 1) Advocacy, 2) Area Based Programming, 3) Knowledge Management, Learning and Sharing, and 4) Data Gathering and Monitoring & Evaluation. Humanitarian, Peacebuilding and Development partners choose to engage on work streams based on their own added value, unique resources and expertise.

Analyzing, addressing and capitalizing on the interlinkages of the Triple HDP Nexus programmatically is extremely relevant and promising for South Sudan. Considering financial allocations, more efforts are devoted to humanitarian and peace purposes (given the urgency of the challenges) than to

development efforts (which tend to be more medium and longer term oriented).[164] There is an absolute need to provide immediate peace dividends such as concrete early recovery measures, but these peace dividends must be accompanied by longer-term people-centered perspectives, such as institutional capacity building, and with a focus on localization so that communities can be directly involved in shaping, planning and of initiatives and projects to harvest positive, tangible and sustainable results in line with their needs. There is also a need for stronger HDP coordination mechanisms to mainstream HDP principles in development interventions, for instance by boosting the RSRTF ongoing efforts.

---

[164] Details in the section "Financing landscape and opportunities"

4. Leave no one behind

In the context of decades of conflict, South Sudanese society may ruthlessly leave specific groups of the population behind, which is reflected in their current status and their capacity for progression.[165] For simplicity, the vulnerable segments analyzed here are women, children and youth, the elderly, internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees and people with disabilities (PWD).[166] However, it is crucial to remember that vulnerability is more accentuated when several characteristics overlap, and therefore such characteristics can also be seen as 'markers'. For instance, in the case of elderly women with disabilities who have been displaced and lost their land, etc.

Widespread vulnerability of large South Sudanese societal groups (especially some minorities completely left behind) explains why social indicators are so deficient and reinforces the earlier analysis on the vital importance of services such as social protection, education, or health. Vulnerability takes several forms, such as social exclusion, extreme poverty, discrimination, or in its worst expressions, violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, or killings. Affecting all vulnerable groups, killings resulting from subnational fights, cattle raiding, revenge attacks and other violent acts are very frequent. Even aid workers and organizations are affected by this, e.g. only in the first six months of 2021 four humanitarian workers were killed, and millions of dollars of humanitarian supplies looted or destroyed.

Little action can sometimes be taken against the perpetrators, which may instil a feeling of impunity and powerlessness among the victims (often in desperate need of psychosocial support). The pattern is so common, and perpetrators get away unpunished so often, that people, especially the youth, can get used to killing and see it as normal and even fun. As noted earlier, one of the reasons for this is limited capacity to apply the rule of law (e.g. with regard to juvenile justice the 2008 Children's Act is not at all implemented), but also limited capacity and motivation of the organized forces to follow orders from Juba. Some staff of the armed forces have been reported to abandon their posts due to not being paid or fed for months, which may push them to seek 'dividends of war' taking advantage of the weak law-enforcement climate to commit violence against the defenceless citizens by stealing, raping, etc. This would be supported by the fact that past efforts have not been successful in producing professional armed forces (to this day the military and other organized forces are a combination of many diverse groups/militias, often based on ethnicity), and hence often depend on the civilian population for various types of support, including food, etc.

Next, for each of the groups identified as vulnerable in South Sudan, this section identifies how they are left behind; what are the root causes of it, and the capacities and/or processes that should be supported to tackle such root causes and revert the situation:

Women

The role of women in society is extremely fragile. They have little say over their lives and are constantly subject to vexing behaviors such as sexual exploitation and abuse, including rape or abductions. For

---

[165] Broadly speaking, e.g. with regards to their poverty, inclusion in decision-making processes, health, education,
[166] This list does not imply ranking.

instance, they get married very early: in 2020, the proportion of women aged 20-49 years who were married or in a union before age 18 was 45% (compared to 35% in East Africa or 21% globally).[167] As they rarely use contraceptives,[168] the adolescent birth rate (aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group in 2020 was 158 (compared to 93 in East Africa and 44 globally).[169]

The normalization of intimate partner violence and GBV means that women and girls are not accorded equal opportunities for fulfilling violence free lives. There is no large-scale data and evidence to determine the prevalence of gender-based violence and there is a need to set up monitoring systems for the same. Despite some efforts to address the issues of gender violence, much remains to be done to ensure their access across the remote areas. Investments are also needed in GBV prevention, involving the traditional leaders and the State duty bearers alike.

The root causes of women's fragile conditions are varied, and include among others, practices such as early or arranged marriages, customary land tenure law or social expectations that don't allow them to invest as much in their human capital as men and boys do. This hampers severely their economic empowerment, which undermines their capacity to have a say in decision-making processes. As a result, they may feel they need ratification and facilitation from the men in their households to access even basic services. Their political representation is clearly insufficient, both at community and national level, e.g. they don't meet the 35% R-ARCSS target of political representation (e.g. the share of seats held by women in the reconstituted transitional legislative assembly in 2021 is about 21%).

These indicators do not really reflect the country's constitutional, legal and policy framework for gender equality and women's economic empowerment (GEWE), which is broadly progressive. South Sudan has signed up to all the main international treaties and protocols. However, there are gaps and contradictions in the legal framework and many laws and policies are not well implemented or enforced. For instance, the National Gender Policy has been in place since 2013 and needs to be more effectively resourced to enable a more comprehensive cross-government approach and building of necessary capacities. Several of the legislative gaps are now being addressed in the preparation for Permanent Constitution-making Process (PCP) (with Anti-GBV and Affirmative Action Laws in the pipeline), and the NDS is being updated. It is important that these processes lead to a stronger prioritization and integration of GEWE outcomes across all sectors and institutions of government, so that spillover effects can go beyond government and reach the entire society.

Implementation of the National Gender Policy (2013) consists of a framework for coordination through ministerial gender focal points at national and state levels. One of the National Gender Policy's specific objectives is to promote equal and effective participation of all citizens in social and political affairs of the nation. The policy underlines the use of gender quotas/affirmative action across all sectors as a key strategy to redressing gender gaps in the participation of women and men in political and public life. The National Gender Policy also calls for the development of appropriate policies and laws to drive meaningful participation of all in electoral and democratic processes. This includes strategies to ensure there is gender-responsive recruitment, retention and promotion

---

[167] UNFPA (2021). https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard
[168] Contraceptive prevalence rate is 1.7%, compare to East Africa's 38% and 58% at global level. UNICEF (2020). https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer
[169] UNICEF (2020). https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer

processes for public service, as well as capacity building, leadership training and mentoring of women. This includes conducting intensive campaigns and awareness-raising on the centrality of GEWE as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. The policy advocates for research and studies on customary practices and traditional beliefs undermining women and girls. The National Gender Policy also encourages the engagement of men and boys, along with traditional, religious and other community opinion leaders in the promotion of GEWE and elimination of practices that reinforce gender inequalities and discrimination against women and girls. Despite the existence of a strong National Gender Policy framework and accompanying strategic plan (2013-18), and SSNAP on Women, Peace and Security, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Work (MGCSW) has inadequate resources to fulfil its policy and coordination mandate; implementation of government GEWE-focused programs are heavily dependent on donor funding.

To address all these factors, it is important to have girls start from an 'even level playing field'. This can be done by strengthening institutional frameworks that can guarantee women's physical integrity and safety, ensure they have full access to basic social services and that they can invest in their future (e.g. notably via their education) without having to be clamped down by patriarchal-based traditions. There are 3 areas that should be supported to manifest a level playing field and achieve the transformation needed for women and girls' equality and security. One is through operationalizing legal frameworks supporting women's equal rights. There is a significant gap between statutory laws and traditional practices. The gap between the two needs to be urgently addressed if gender equity is to be achieved. This can be done through mechanisms such as hybrid courts, which can bridge the statutory-customary divide, thereby supporting reform of traditional practices that are especially detrimental to women and girls. Participatory tools that engage women (and men) in planning for basic service delivery should also be ensured. Also, an integrated approach to Women's Economic Empowerment, supporting girls and women with education, training and assets for production while addressing issues of security and mental health. Lastly, as cultural norms are significantly engrained, shifts in attitudes and beliefs regarding women and girls' rights and roles in society can be addressed through media, education and the arts. Still, the best means of achieving this societal shift will be through the inclusion of women in leadership including in the private sector and government, thus providing real life examples of the gender equality the country seeks to achieve and normalizing women's roles as leaders and active participants in all sectors of society.

Children and Youth

Children and youth face a myriad of obstacles to the fulfilments of their rights and to their well-being. Critical issues include a lack of quality education; entrenched gender equality affecting girls, particularly in relation to child marriage; and ongoing conflict and violence. Children comprise around 25% of all reported cases of conflict-related violence. Since the start of the conflict, thousands of children (both boys and girls) have been recruited in to armed forces and groups; some released are as young as 8 years of age.[170]

Years of conflict has resulted in a lack of comprehensive child protection systems including welfare and justice. Only 35% of children under five have their birth registered, which reflects the almost non-

---

[170] MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020

existence of a civil registration (no resources are allocated to implement the 2018 Civil Registration Act) and a vital statistics (CRVS) system. Children in South Sudan, particularly those without appropriate care, are vulnerable to being trafficked for the purposes of exploitation including sex work or labor. This also increases the risks of statelessness for refugees and asylum-seeking children born in South Sudan. The Civil Registry Act was adopted in 2018, but the regulation has not yet been adopted. Child labor is found throughout South Sudan: children often work in farming activities, construction, restaurants and food stands, and slaughterhouses, as well as in others that are more 'invisible' such as domestic child labor. They also engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict, gold mining, brick making and cattle herding.[171]

Increased livelihood pressures – a result of economic deterioration owing to the COVID-19 pandemic – have led to an increase in economically motivated violence and criminality, including heightened sexual and gender-based violence targeted in particular at young girls, with a notable increase in forced and child marriage, and adolescent pregnancy.[172]

It has been estimated that since 2013, over a million children have been affected by psychosocial distress.[173] However, while poor mental health is very damaging for children's development, it is often overlooked or not attended to as fragile health care systems struggle to accommodate the most basic health care needs. A constant state of fear contributes to an increasing mental-health burden on adolescents, youth, and adults alike.[174]

South Sudan's youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years are especially vulnerable to risks such as recruitment by armed groups, violence and exploitation, GBV including child marriage, unintended pregnancies, STIs including HIV and AIDS, substance abuse, mental health issues, injuries and disabilities and limited access to general health, including access to life saving comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly health services. A lack of quality education means young adults have few economic opportunities and lack skills to open businesses. It is essential to provide meaningful and productive economic engagement for young people and to train and empower them to be 'champions of change', to steer the country towards peace – along with breaking stereotypes that depict youth as 'trouble-makers'.[175]

Elderly

The elderly (65+ years) are estimated to be about 1.6% of all the population, of which 123,073 are males while 95,258 are females. This small proportion of the population makes them be overlooked in the country's development process. Various negative attitudes about ageing and older people have also had significant consequences for the physical and mental health of older adults. The communities take older people as a burden and less valuable, putting them at risk of depression and social isolation. Older people are often depicted as dependent, and out of touch. They as discriminated against in

---

[171] Ibid
[172] Ibid
[173] UNICEF (2021)
[174] Ibid
[175] Ibid

terms of access to health care, information and other basic services like water, food and housing. Significantly, the government does not have social security programs for the elderly.

The seeming lack of attention to older people and worsening economic circumstances are exacerbating existing serious violations of older people's rights. Older women and men are being discriminated against before the law, and within their families and communities. Few older people have access to the social security and legal protection that are theirs by right. In addition, they are often denied the right to participate in development activities. Older women, in particular, are often subject to discriminatory inheritance and property laws, and face greater discrimination in access to services. Due to lack of awareness or negative attitudes, professionals and family and friends can fail to detect abuse of older women and men, often assuming that their problems are caused by 'old age. This discrimination is exacerbated during displacement which is fairly common given the chronic crisis in the country. The Humanitarian Policy group report on older people in displacement (2018) noted that the roles of older South Sudanese displaced people, both men and women, change during displacement. It found that older people's traditional power and influence diminish because their roles in communities are determined, not only by local rules and values, but also by their ownership and management of natural and other resources. The loss of this control during displacement can have significant implications for older people's power, influence and access to community support.

To promote and protect the rights of older people, it is important to develop and implement social security programs for older people and also increase access to data disaggregated by age and gender, policies, legal and programmatic frameworks addressing discrimination, neglect, abuse and violence against older people. It is also important to have access to data that reveals discrimination on grounds prohibited under international human rights law and assist to monitor the achievement of age inclusion and gender equality across the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

It is critical that South Sudan establishes cross-sector coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels to coordinate action on ageing and the rights of older people to ensure progress is in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of older people. Specifically, human rights reporting mechanisms at all levels are to report on the progress and challenges in achieving the human rights of older people, while governments and development partners are to adequately allocate resources on ageing and the rights of older people. There is an urgent need for governments to urgently ratify, domesticate and implement the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Older Persons in Africa.

Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

Close to ten years after the independence, South Sudan hosts more than 1.7 million internally displaced persons, 77% of whom reside with host communities and 23% within displacement sites. Close to a half of IDPs are in situation of protracted displacement for over five years[176]. This situation challenges the often-assumed idea that internal displacement is a temporary situation for the displaced communities, given the long stays witnessed among IDPs in the country.

---

[176] IOM South Sudan (2021)

Uprooted from their areas of habitual residence, IDPs are in a particularly vulnerable situation, often left to cater for their needs by themselves, or with support from host communities where resources are already scarce. Location-level data on IDPs shows that, while needs are generally most severe in less accessible rural areas, they remain significant in urban centers, whereas access to services and humanitarian assistance is most stable within largest IDP camps and displacement sites. Overall gaps in infrastructure and services, persistent insecurity in the different areas due to changes in seasonal migration patterns or sub-national violence, unexploded ordnance contamination, unsorted housing, land and property issues, natural disasters (flooding, droughts) and limited means for return or relocation, are only some of the challenges IDPs face. This daunting challenge requires comprehensive interventions from humanitarian, transition and recovery partners in the country to start working on long term programs supporting durable solutions and developing interventions that will work across the humanitarian, development and peace building nexus and advocate for sustainable peace and country's political and economic stability. Thus, while stop-gap measures to support these communities' transition to their final destination are key, there is also need to have long term measures that address the emerging permanency of these communities. These include land reforms addressing ownership, including ownership and access for women.

Refugees

There are more than 329,000 refugees in South Sudan. Most of them (92%) are Sudanese. Women and children represent 81% of all refugees. The vulnerability of refugees is visible in that they face significant challenges in accessing basic services, livelihoods and security. Furthermore, refugees and host communities have been negatively affected by the COVID-pandemic. The local governance structures in the refugee-hosting areas face acute lack of funding, delayed salary payments, prolonged staff absences, poor infrastructure, and capacity challenges while remaining largely reliant upon UNHCR and humanitarian actors for assistance.

To address the gaps relating to refugees, the government of South Sudan has adopted important policy frameworks. South Sudan has acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The National Legislative Assembly adopted the Refugee Act on 5 June 2012 in line with the Transitional Constitution, which recognizes, among others, the right for refugees to seek employment. The government of South Sudan also made important pledges in the 2019 Global Refugee Forum to promote access to livelihoods and economic opportunities, safe conditions for return, access to education and climate adaptation. In 2019, South Sudan developed a National Framework for Return, Reintegration and Relocation of Displaced Persons.

Furthermore, the Government of South Sudan, through the facilitation role of IGAD and with the support of some development partners and donors, under the Solutions Initiative has finalized development of a draft National Durable Solutions Strategy and an Action Plan for Refugees, Returnees, Internally Displaced Persons and Host Communities. This Strategy builds on the 2019 National Framework and focuses on solutions for refugees in South Sudan.

South Sudan has also adhered to the Global Compact for Refugees and made important pledges during the first Global Refugee Forum which took place in December 2019. These commitments include

taking concrete steps in the area of rule of law and access to justice; peace building initiatives to promote sustainable and durable solutions; expand access to education and reduce school drop out by 2024 by improving school infrastructure, training of teachers; promote and expand economic opportunities for refugee areas through vocational training, expanding access to arable land and promoting improved agricultural techniques; and facilitate improved access to sustainable and green energy solutions for refugees and host communities by planting 100 million trees in line with the national reforestation program and policy; piloting of innovative approaches to resilience and climate-smart adaptation. Some progress has been achieved in designing a national durable solutions strategy and expanding access to education. The government has developed a national action plan to implement the Djibouti Declaration on Education for refugees, returnees and host communities.[177]

Persons with Disabilities (PWD)

It is unclear how many persons with disabilities there are in South Sudan, though the number is supposed to be very high: Based on the last census undertaken (2008), PWDs in South Sudan accounted for 5.1% of the population (0.6-1.2 million). That number is believed to be underestimated because of the way in which disability was defined, as well as the likelihood that stigma prevented people from identifying themselves as being persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the violence experienced since then is supposed to have favoured an increase of PWDs, who are extremely marginalized. Common disabilities can relate to innate conditions or derive from the lack of basic social services such as poor healthcare, e.g. the lack of vaccines. PWD are marginalized in all sectors of society, e.g. it has been reported that visually impaired children find it difficult to fit in ordinary schools as they have special needs.[178]

Children, and especially girls with disabilities are particularly at risk of marginalization due to factors such as increased rates of violence, and lack of access to schooling. If children with disabilities do attend school, they have to cope with high levels of bullying and name calling, which leads to dropout. In addition, children are often designated as a caregiver of an adult with a disability, which will compromise their chance of attending school.[179] Data on disabilities and gender in South Sudan are not available, but women and girls living with disabilities are highly marginalized with limited access to care and devices. Women and girls with disability face further stigmatization and are often hidden or isolated, are less likely to go to school and face higher levels of violence.

An important element to address the situation is the legal and institutional framework in this area. For instance, there is no disability-specific legislation. The "South Sudan National Disability and Inclusion Policy 2015" was drafted by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW), from a rights-based perspective, and guided by the principles of non-discrimination, affirmative action, diversity, and inclusiveness, recognizing that people with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Similarly, National Inclusive Education Policy 2014 was drafted and is currently under review. Two other elements have a strong bearing on the rights of persons with disabilities in South Sudan:

---

[177] The implementation of this action plan has been hampered by school closure during the height of COVID-19 pandemic, lack of capacity of key government institutions and resource constraints.
[178] Radio Tamazuj (2021). "Visually impaired persons demand specialized schools". Available at https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/visually-impaired-persons-demand-specialized-schools
[179] MoFP and UNICEF, The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020

- The rights of persons with disabilities are incorporated in the South Sudanese Constitution. Under Article 29(I), the Right to Education, it states that "Education is a right for every citizen and all levels of government shall provide access to education without discrimination as to religion, race, ethnicity, health status including HIV/AIDS, gender or disability";
- Under Article 139 (1)(d), the Basic Values and Guidelines for Civil Service, it states that "The Civil Service shall be governed by, inter alia, the following values and principles: services shall be provided to all persons impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias or discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity, region, gender, health status or physical disability."

Similarly, a vital gap is the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This process started in 2015, but to-date it has not been ratified by the Government of South Sudan. The MGCSW indicated in its draft National Action Plan for Victim Assistance and Persons with Disabilities (2019-2024) that it plans to set up a monitoring mechanism for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. No government system has been established for the monitoring of CRPD implementation. Throughout 2019, two of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) Specialized Committees with support from OHCHR held public consultations with Civil Society Organizations, including the Union of PWDs to solicit public views on the Bill for the ratification of the CRPD, which is currently pending the final reading before the TNLA.

Looking forward, the MGCSW has drafted a National Action Plan for Victim Assistance and Persons with Disabilities 2019 – 2024 that will serve as a key document for the implementation of the "South Sudan National Disability and Inclusion Policy 2015".

Finally, given that characteristics of vulnerability are so common, they hardly come up individually and hence they are often compounded by a combination of them. It is important to support the development of institutional frameworks that can recognize this – again, with a strong emphasis on basic social services and financial support. In this vein, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, does include women with disabilities. The National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF 2015) was approved alongside allocation of 1% of the National Annual Budget to cater for implementation of the various interventions contained in the policy, including the Disability Grant, War Veteran Grant, Old Age Grant among others. However, these grants have yet to be enacted by the government.

5. National Vision and Capacity for Sustainable Development

South Sudan's vision for sustainable development is anchored in several anchors at national, regional and global level:

The R-ARCSS outlines general commitments made in six substantive chapters i) governance ii) security, iii) humanitarian assistance and reconstruction; iv) resources, economic and financial management; v) transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing; and vi) constitutional matters. The R-ARCSS provides a national vision for sustainable development and a roadmap for the Revitalized-Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGNOU) to govern South Sudan during the transitional period until national elections can be held and an elected government can be established.

The 2011 TCSS supported women's participation in political processes, more specifically that women shall have the right to participate equally with men in public life, and that all levels of government shall promote women's participation in public life and their representation in the legislative and executive organs by at least 25% as an affirmative action to redress imbalances created by history and customs. In 2018, this provision was amended in the R-ARCSS to guarantee 35% of women's representation in the government. Despite the 35% quota for women in government, women are typically discouraged from joining political parties and encounter backlash from political parties that are reluctant to abide by the R-ARCSS, which is a responsibility sharing agreement and includes a commitment to a 35% affirmative action quota for women's representation and participation in all positions established by R-ARCSS. In the absence of oversight mechanisms to enforce implementation of the 35% quota for women, there has been an underrepresentation of women in the Executive and State Governorships, Cabinets, Commissions and Parliaments. Women's representation and participation is also lacking in organized structures, such as the Executive Leaders Caucus and the Revitalized Transitional Government, which includes the Vice President and National Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

The National Dialogue (ND) has helped refine national sustainable development priorities. The ND was designed to give the public and political leaders a space to interact, voice concerns and create a foundation for sustainable development through engagement and dialogue to provide recommendations on a variety of issues related to implementation of the peace agreement including governance, security sector reform, the economy and recommendations for social cohesion in South Sudan. Through the ND, which gained in inclusiveness over time, the public had a mechanism to voice their concerns, whereas the R-ARCSS is a mechanism through which the parties to the conflict reached a national peace agreement.

Upon the formation of the R-TGNOU in February 2020, new entry points for sustainable development in South Sudan emerged. Support to institutions for implementation of key provisions of the peace agreement including especially chapter 5: transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing and critical support to strengthening community security platforms will be vital. This will serve not only as early warning and preventive mechanisms against low intensity, violent community level conflicts but also complement UN strategic initiatives and program support. Further, the National Development Strategy (NDS) has created political momentum for government to engage in

development issues; sustaining peace and consolidating the gains achieved will require continued UN and partner support.

Concerns have been mounting due to delays in enacting transitional justice mechanisms and processes, although the process to establish the *Truth, Reconciliation and Healing Commission* was finally launched in early July 2021. While there is general support for a restorative approach to transitional justice, women (74%) have been found to be more in favor of prison sentences for perpetrators than men (54%).[180] There is a need to strongly involve women, including VAWG survivors and others at the grassroots level, in the design and implementation of planned transitional justice processes; to date, such efforts have been relatively limited, thus need to be scaled up.

The NDS was required as part of the Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) signed in 2015. South Sudan has been implementing the three-year plan, formulated and launched in 2018 to consolidate peace and stabilize the economy. The NDS is the first national planning document and has been a vital instrument for implementing the R-ARCSS. Chapter IV of the agreement requires the Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP) to review the NDS to better align with the new political, economic and institutional context. The review will also create an opportunity to learn critical lessons from the NDS 2018-2021, including budget alignment and expenditure, broadening domestic revenue collection to finance implementation, clear implementation arrangements and effective coordination structures at both national and state levels.

Based on the extensive consultations undertaken in the process to review the NDS, the main national priorities for 2021 in South Sudan have already been determined and are basic services and peace. Further, those two priority areas are further decomposed into – with their correspondences to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in parentheses:
- Zero Hunger (SDG 2)
- Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3)
- Quality Education (SDG 4)
- Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6)
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)

Such findings are in line with international analyses such as that in the Social Progress Index, which looks at the well-being of a society rather than its GDP, measuring basic physical needs for life such as food and shelter, essential services including health and education, as well as access to fundamental freedoms. South Sudan ranked on the bottom of the global list.[181]

The NDS does have some focus on GEWE within its objectives (noting the need for gender mainstreaming and women's access and participation) and SDG 16, to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, is considered the main priority.

The NDS represents a key step towards achieving the objective of the Vision 2040, which aims to

---

[180] Perceptions of Transitional Justice in South Sudan
https://www.kpsrl.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/908_perceptions_of_transitional_justice_in_south_sudan_final_report.pdf
[181] Social Progress Index. Available at https://www.socialprogress.org/?code=SSD&tab=2

define the type of country that South Sudanese would like to have by the year 2040.[182] Vision 2040, with the theme "Toward Freedom, Equality, Justice, Peace and Prosperity for All", is a channel for strategic thinking and policy-making, through which all the people of South Sudan can unite, join hands together and contribute towards achieving the goal of building the nation. South Sudan's Vision 2040[183] has a general focus on equality but does explicitly mention gender equality or women's empowerment.

Another important inspiration of South Sudan's NDS is the African Agenda 2063, which envisions an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.[184] A key aspiration of the African Agenda 2063 that provides inspiration for the NDS is a peaceful and secure Africa.[185]

The most important anchor for the development of South Sudan at global level are the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs. As noted in the NDS, "the SDGs present a global blueprint to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. As a member of the global community these aspirations truly reflect the shared values and ambitions of the people and government of South Sudan. Within the current challenging country context, the NDS represents initial steps to domesticate the global agenda. The NDS is informed by priorities agreed during SDG consultations held by national stakeholders."[186]

An important element for the operationalization of the NDS are the country's sector working groups (SWGs). SWGs are fora, organized around sectors, where all stakeholders can dialogue and coordinate their efforts. Although the SWGs were nominally revived last year, they remain operationally weak (e.g. as of July 2021 hardly any meetings have taken place), and it is vital to support their capacity.

More broadly, institutional capacity in South Sudan is extremely weak. This is easily perceived in aspects such as the lack of digitalization in basic government-related functions (e.g. computers, internet, emails, etc.). A proxy that measures institutional capacity is the policy and institutional assessment (CPIA), which shows that South Sudan is the lowest ranked in Sub-Saharan Africa (37th out of 37 countries assessed).[187] While policy and institutional assessments can vary and be structured around different pillars, both available offer a very similar picture.[188] The main features are that institutional capacity has deteriorated since 2011 (Figure 3), economic management has deteriorated the most (Figure 4) and remains the weakest (Figure 5).

---

[182] Republic of South Sudan (2018). "National Development Strategy: Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy"
[183] As developed at the time of independence in 2011.
[184] Republic of South Sudan (2018). "National Development Strategy: Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy"
[185] African Union (2021). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Available at https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview
[186] Republic of South Sudan (2018). "National Development Strategy: Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy"
[187] https://cpia.afdb.org/?page=results&subpage=profile&indicator_id=A-E_&country_id=SS&year=2020
[188] Those of the African Development Bank and the World Bank
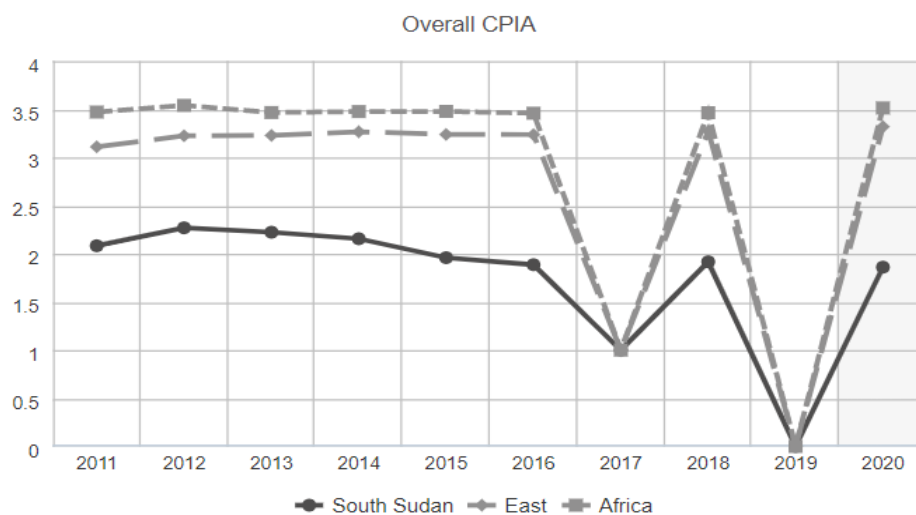
Figure 3. Evolution of CPIA since 2011.[189]
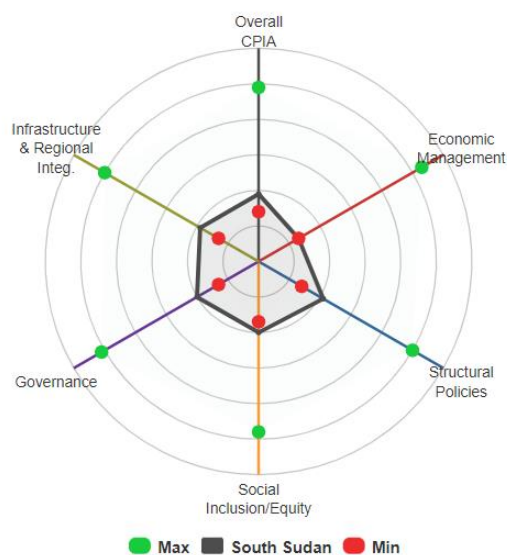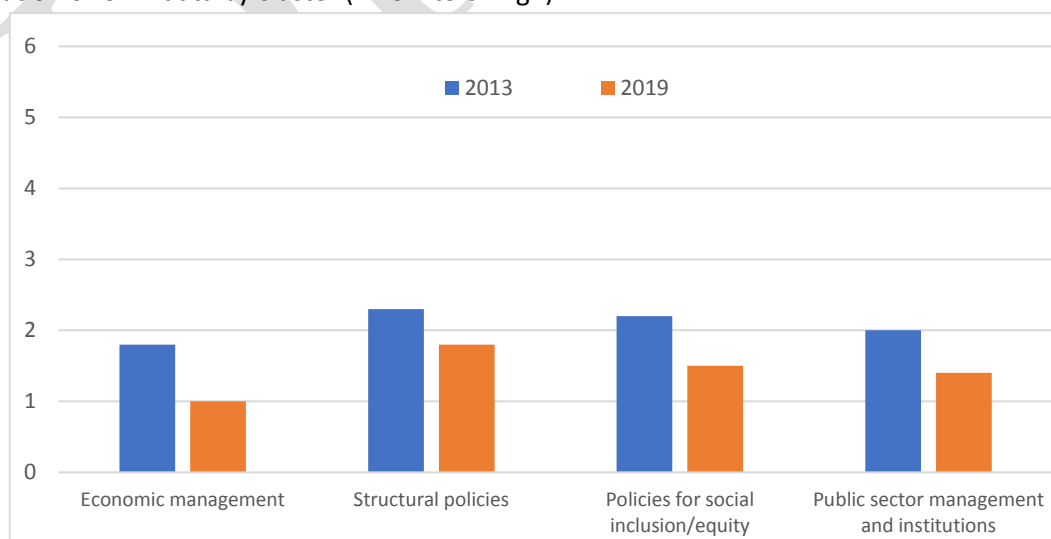

Figure 4. CPIA (2020)[190]

Figure 5. Evolution of CPIA data by cluster (1=low to 6=high)[191]

[189] African Development Bank (2020).
[190] African Development Bank (2020).
[191] World Bank (2021).

6. Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

Measuring progress towards the 2030 Agenda, and in particular towards the achievement of the SDGs has not been so far a priority in South Sudan due to more urgent matters such as the peace process.[192] Only one report, the country's 'Inaugural SDG Report', was elaborated to do so in 2017 (reflecting a very important lack of data for reporting progress towards the SDGs).[193] Such report noted:

"Nearly all available data on the SDGs paint a grim picture, and the main underlying factor is the ongoing armed conflict. Finding a lasting political resolution to the conflict and building a peaceful, just and inclusive society, as expressed in SDG 16, was the most urgent and widely expressed priority of stakeholders consulted for this report. SDG 16 is also seen as an 'enabler' that can unlock pathways in most other SDG areas and build the foundations for longer-term development. Restoring security among communities is the single quickest way to increase school attendance, boost agricultural productivity, facilitate access to markets, and achieve more inclusive economic growth. Similarly, addressing the conditions of and finding solutions for the country's displaced people, and enabling them to make informed and positive choices, is needed to make progress on the SDG framework as a whole. Long-term progress on the SDGs will require more inclusion of marginalized groups and increased accountability in the political and governance spheres (alongside technical and capacity building approaches) and establishing what an equitable and representative South Sudanese state and society can and should look like. It will require addressing the very real justice and reconciliation needs of the people, as well as the historical (and more recent) grievances that underpin many inter-communal tensions and violence.

Additional findings reflect the need for unimpeded delivery of food aid and concrete steps to revive the agricultural sector and reduce food insecurity (SDG 2), which is increasingly widespread, and to improve access to quality education for all (SDG 4). They also call for eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and making concrete advances on gender equality (SDG 5), and addressing years of economic stagnation and reversing the severe austerity measures currently in place (SDG 8). Approaches to addressing these, and other priority areas, are referred to as 'critical pathways'. They require applying SDG principles, accounting for the impact of the conflict, and defining desired and lasting outcomes. For instance, by applying the principle of 'leave no one behind,' SDG strategies can be advanced across the entire spectrum of South Sudanese society, irrespective of gender, ethnic or political affiliation, or socio-economic status. Similarly, recognizing how all the SDGs are 'interlinked' means that while some goals need to be prioritized, other (less recognized) goals neither can, nor should, be excluded. For example, gender equality (SDG 5) is overlooked in South Sudan, even though women and girls are disadvantaged in most aspects of public and private life. As such, strategies to promote the advancement of women and girls in society are needed, not only as part of SDG 5 but as part of all SDG efforts.

---

[192] United Nations South Sudan and National Bureau of Statistics (2021). "South Sudan SDGs Data Landscape Diagnostic Report".
[193] Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Finance and Planning, and United Nations South Sudan (2017).

Delivering on the SDGs will require strategic, long-term efforts to alter the status quo and reverse harmful trends. Financing them will entail a structural shift from security-related spending to increased social expenditure. This must occur alongside an expansion of the tax base, and a diversification of the economy away from its dependency on oil. In addition to mobilizing domestic resources, revitalizing the global partnership for development (SDG 17) will also be part and parcel of bringing the SDGs to life in South Sudan. The process will be long and hard but the SDGs are integral to this young country's development as a safe, thriving and cohesive society, with all citizens and the institutions that represent them working towards the wellbeing of the country."

Although the armed conflict has stopped, such assessment remains valid today and has been complemented by more recent efforts to assess the country's progress towards the SDGs. Notably, the 2020 Africa SDG Index notes that in Africa, low performers towards the SDGs are mainly composed of fragile states with high levels of poverty and conflict in their territories.[194] South Sudan had the lowest score of all 52 countries including in the analysis (32.36), meaning that the country is 32.36% of the way towards achieving the SDGs according to the report's methodology. The study includes an examination of both the status of each SDG and the trends, which are reproduced here:[195]
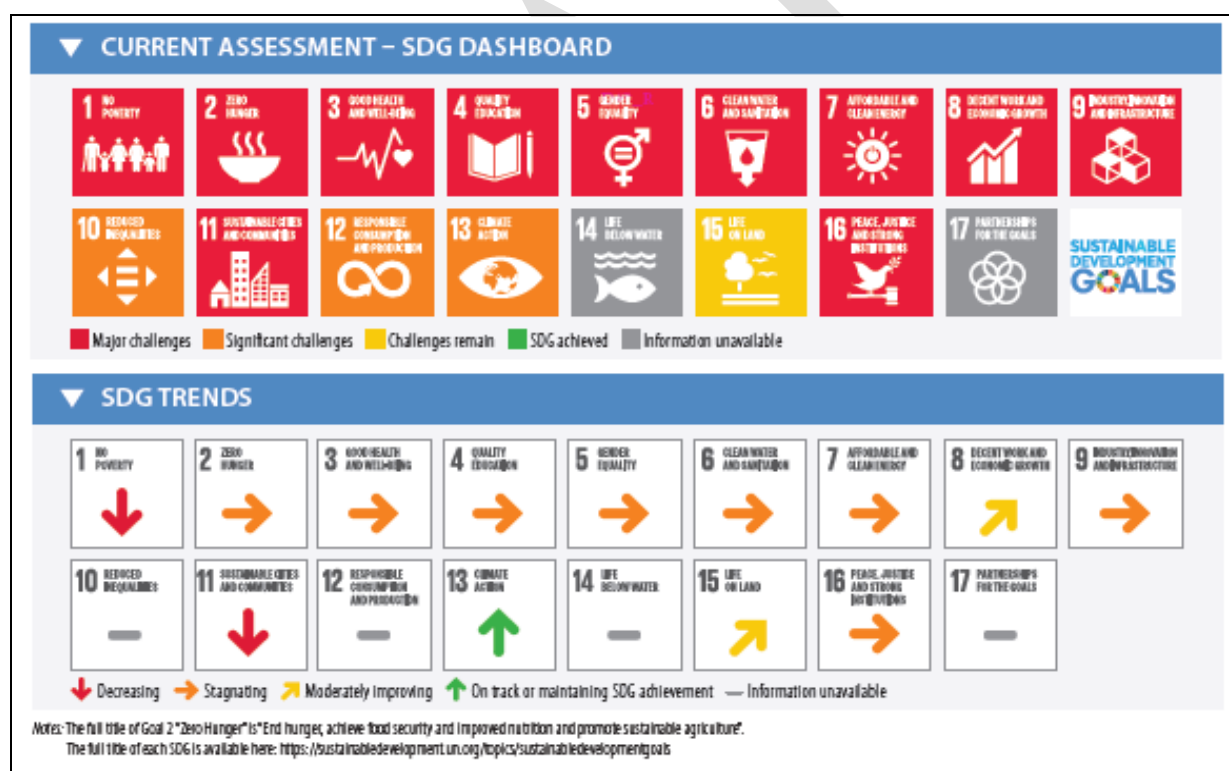
Most SDGs are associated with major challenges, and only three SDGs (8,13 and 15) have seen progress. On the trends exhibited so far, the country would only achieve one SDG (13), but it should be noted that it relies on indicators such as energy-related CO_2 emissions per capita – which shows progress because people continue without access to electricity. The trends also show

---

[194] The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2020): "Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2020".
[195] From page 160 of Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2020.

a deterioration in two very important SDGs, such as sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) and, most importantly, poverty (SDG 1).

SDG nationalization and localization

An important element that may contribute to explaining the evolution of progress towards the 2030 Agenda is nationalization and localization of the SDGs. A recent assessment by the UN on the SDGs' data landscape noted:[196]

"The SDGs in South Sudan are not mainstreamed into the workings of the government.[197] Their general awareness and that of the agenda 2030 overall is low. Everything to do with SDGs in the country is proactively initiated from the UN, donors and other development partners' side. This includes data on SDGs indicators. The National Development Strategy seem to only have been incidentally aligned to a few of the SDGs, rather than being sufficiently predetermined so. The country at least from the government side, is not run keeping in mind the SDGs. Development partners on the other hand, whose annual budget tops $2bn annually, about 7 times the national budget, are working to inculcate the culture of aligning government development blueprints to the SDGs."

Challenges to Measure Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

Data are an integral part of governance and decision-making in any country, and the quality of data systems is inextricably linked with both political and technical decision-making that involves the allocation of resources and the political will to base development decisions on evidence. South Sudan's data ecosystem, like other institutional frameworks, is a function of the state of the general socio-political and economic situation and recent history of the country: decades of conflict have negatively impacted on data institutions and availability.

A central example reflecting how precarious the data ecosystem is, is demographic data (i.e. census, civil registration and vital statistics): the most recent census was conducted in 2008,[198] before independence, so the GoSS and development partners rely on population projections for planning. (Given the state of fragility and constant displacement and movement of people, the projections may not reflect the true population dynamics of the country and the allocation of resources is therefore skewed). No national identification system is currently in place, no system exists for registering deaths, and there is no officially sanctioned system for recording other civil events such as marriages and divorces. In 2010 (most recent data), only 35% of births in the country were registered.[199] No legislation was in place to record births or to issue birth certificates when South Sudan gained its

---

[196] United Nations South Sudan and National Bureau of Statistics (2021). "South Sudan SDGs Data Landscape Diagnostic Report".

[197] With the possible exception of SDG4 where the MOGEI with support of the SDG4 co-conveners organized a national consultation and efforts have been made to align the General Education Strategic Plan 2017-2022 to SDG4 and the Continental Education Strategy 2016-2026.

[198] A hybrid census exercise to estimate the population was undertaken in 2021. As of August 2021, the results have not been released.

[199] South Sudan Household Health Survey (SHHS 2). This is likely to be an overestimate, as it is estimated that 88% of mothers give birth outside of hospitals. This survey was also conducted when South Sudan was still an autonomous region within Sudan, where a more solid birth registration regime existed in the then Greater Regions of Bahr El Gazel, Equatoria and Upper Nile.

independence in 2011. Although the Civil Registry Act of 2018 was passed it has not been operationalized. Civil registry structures are also yet to be established at state and county levels, so despite some specific efforts[200] there is no official birth registration system.

Alignment between the NDS clusters (Governance, Economy, Social services and Cross-cutting[201]) and the SDG Agenda is not well formalized or clear-cut, and the SDGs do not seem to have much influence on national policy-making. Most government respondents expressed the view that the SDGs were not considered a priority by the government and did not have high-profile champions. Thus, the UN is the main driver of any discussions and efforts within the country related to the SDGs and there is little evidence of any serious proactive effort from government to officially "domesticate" the SDGs, beyond occasional mentions in development and planning documents. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) drafted a proposed coordination framework for the SDGs monitoring and reporting and a National SDG Monitoring Taskforce is in place, but these efforts do not appear to have been proactively embraced by the GoSS. National awareness of the SDGs is generally low.

The deep, widespread deficiencies in the data ecosystem reflect the country's weak statistical institutions. The NBS has virtually none of the technical infrastructure required to maintain a credible national statistics office. The 2012 National Statistical Act established the NBS as an autonomous body with a mandate for the development, management, coordination and dissemination of statistics, but the authority bestowed on the NBS by the Act has been substantially undermined. Currently the NBS is not answerable to the President and reports to the Ministry of Public Service. Rather than obtaining its funding via the national budget as befits an autonomous body, it is the MoFP that determines the level of NBS funding.

One reason why funding for the NBS is so limited may be that that the role of statistics not valued by many policymakers and politicians. Furthermore, poor physical infrastructure makes it both difficult and expensive to gather data nationally: many areas cannot be reached due to insecurity and many places are only accessible by air. Hence, conducting a survey thus becomes a very expensive exercise.

Most of the small budget the NBS receives is used largely to pay for staff salaries (with high arrears pending). Turnover of staff is very high, as they are highly qualified but poorly paid, and only around half of NBS staff positions are currently filled. There are no resources available to draw up the next NBS strategic plan, and the NBS depends heavily on donors for data production. As the few surveys the NBS has produced are donor-driven, it is often donors who set the agenda for national statistics in South Sudan.

Beyond the NBS, every Ministry, Department and Agency (MDA) is supposed to establish and staff a statistics unit, but few have qualified statisticians. Local government structures do not function well and their capacity to use data is extremely limited. A common governance dynamic revolves more around control of resources by different factions than any focus on service delivery. Thus, the NBS and most MDAs are not producing enough data of sufficient quality to be able to adequately measure progress on the SDGs on their own, and it is vital to strengthen data ecosystems so that they are

---

[200] For instance, a UNICEF-supported birth notification pilot has been ongoing in Northern Bahr el Ghazal for three years and in other regional/state hospitals and at the Protection of Civilians (POC) sites in Malakal, Bor and Bentiu.
[201] Environment, women and youth, capacity building and support for local services

robust enough to be the direct and primary sources of all data on SDG indicators in South Sudan.

At subnational level the data collection situation is worse. Even though the NBS has a presence (an office at least) in each of the 10 states, most states are institutionally weak and have no capacity to collect data on their own. The civil war which began in 2013 led to the collapse of state offices which until then had functioned to some degree. The country's political dynamics also mean that relationships between central and state governments are fraught with suspicion, especially around sensitive issues concerning resources, population data and boundaries. The poor state of physical and technological infrastructure and the insecurity that is still prevalent in many parts of the country make the challenges worse. Most government officials at state level have neither the capacity to demand nor ability to interpret data from health management information systems as they cannot afford to hire statisticians. Similarly, school administrators at county and payam levels, while being sources of education data, seldom use these data in their own decision-making at the local level. The same is seen with food security and nutrition data and WASH information. The NBS is expected to train line ministries and agencies on the use of data and statistics, but there is no funding available to do so.

Coordination Between National and International Stakeholders

It is important to note that the country's data landscape has two sides: On one hand is the official national statistical system, headed and coordinated by the NBS, which faces enormous challenges including lack of resources to produce basic official data, limited coordination, lack of timely statistics and limited technical capacity to produce good administrative data. On the other hand, there is the humanitarian data ecosystem, better funded and therefore fairly data-rich, most of it stemming from short term fragility studies, assessments, evaluations, etc. The two worlds are not sufficiently coordinating with each other to build a robust national data ecosystem and seem to be having different goals: humanitarians actors deal with emergencies and have little time to build sustainable systems. Scores of humanitarian organizations are involved in mostly short-term needs-based initiatives to collect data and information to work with (e.g. small-scale surveys, research activities and M&E activities, among others). Some of these stopgap measures have become semi-permanent or even permanent, to the detriment of the more complicated task of supporting the national agencies charged with collecting data, notably the NBS.

All humanitarian agencies and development partners are required to coordinate their data collection plans and share their data with the NBS, but this does not happen and there is very little cooperation. The NBS manages the national sampling frame and a compendium of definitions and so humanitarian agencies make token efforts to "involve" it, but they do not involve it in the design of their methodologies or other aspects of their studies. Both the GoSS and its development partners need to fully embrace the fact that data are an essential element in the processes of peace-making, State-building and human development. What is really needed is a comprehensive and effective aid coordination system that can facilitate the efficient channeling of available resources where they are most needed.

Linked to this, there is a marked difference in the way government officials perceive South Sudan's data challenges (and its development challenges in general), compared with how donors and humanitarian actors perceive the same issues. Many humanitarian actors tend to consider

government capacity too weak to perform certain data functions. Government officials, while acknowledging the existence of technical and governance challenges, believe that this emphasis by donors and humanitarians on capacity and governance is sometimes overblown and is used as an excuse to continue to bypass the government when implementing key humanitarian and development programs. For example, most humanitarian data on South Sudan are stored in foreign repositories, and the participation of country-based institutions in the design of methodologies and tools is not clear-cut if it exists at all (most of these tend to be designed abroad). The UN's Human Rights Based Approach to Data (HRBAD) defines participation to be "in relation to the entire data collection process: from strategic planning through identification of data needs; selecting and testing an appropriate collection methodology; data collection (for instance, hiring interviewers from particular communities to improve response rates); and to data storage, dissemination, analysis and interpretation".

Sectoral Aspects

By sectors, the health sector probably has the most reliable, timely and complete information management system (HMIS), being able to provide data for some of the SDG 3 indicators. This is in large part due to strong support from development partners, delivered through health systems strengthening programs which have included technical support for data systems. However, the gaps are very considerable and the HMIS is weak, with health workers not filling in registers due to inadequate motivation and lack of resources. Parallel investment by international partners aggravates the situation, with parallel reporting lines resulting in poor reporting rates by DHIS2. No significant survey of any kind has been conducted since 2010, there are few official statistical sources for most of the indicators. A November 2021 joint review of the health sector found that there is a functional governance gap between the strategic level (Ministry of Health, MOH) and the sub-national levels of the health system to implement policies, due to the legislative mandates of States. In a similar vein, there has also been irregular national level (Health Sector Steering Committee) coordination meetings at national level in the past years, leading to a slow pace in strengthening coordination of health services' delivery.

Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) was noted by South Sudanese in 2017 as one of the most important priorities (half the country's population lack access to safe water and just 10% have access to improved sanitation). The water information system was intended to lead to the development of subsystems including a hydrological information system and the establishment of an environmental information center, but these plans have not been implemented. Most WASH interventions are currently donor-driven (often, via parallel systems). The GoSS does not prioritize the sector, and the ministry plays only a policy role. The WASH Cluster has about 50 partners reporting monthly, which also shows that coordination is not easy with so many actors.

Limited national capacities for social protection remain a key challenge, and social protection is identified by the NDS as a priority in combating poverty and social exclusion. In 2015, the GoSS approved the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF), which envisages a national social protection system with strong coordination and a range of social protection programs for the most vulnerable. The government committed to allocating 1% of its annual budget to finance the NSPPF through the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MoGCSW). However, social welfare is the most underfunded sector, which hampers plans for establishing data collection activities. Currently

MoGCSW maintains no systems itself for the production or management of data. There are, however, several social protection programs funded by donors, and each of these maintains its own data management mechanisms. At least four different information management systems are used to enroll and monitor beneficiaries in social protection programs.

With regards to nutrition information, significant changes have been made since 2013 to the validation of SMART surveys and reporting harmonization of the Outpatient Therapeutic Programme and Supplementary Feeding Programme and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices, the IPC and the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) to create the Nutrition Information System (NIS).[202] The NIS has substantially improved the coordination of nutrition data, and nutrition information is shared with the M&E department of the MoH. Efforts to integrate the NIS into DHIS2 have been ongoing since 2015 but have not yet come to fruition.

Regarding immunization, there has been an expansion of the cold chain infrastructure by adding solar powered refrigerators at the service delivery points to enhance access, institutionalization of the capacity building of the cold chain related health workers, improving the vaccine visibility at national, state and county levels for ensuring un-interrupted supply of potent vaccines for vaccination sessions. The program conducted cVDPV2 outbreak response vaccination activities that were able to limit the circulation of the virus. Similarly, nationwide measles follow-up campaign helped controlling the measles outbreaks reported from all the states of the country in 2019 and early 2020.

Integrating the health and nutrition systems would have great benefits for both sectors. NIS tools and indicators have been identified, and the MoH is seeking resources to train and build the capacity of health and nutrition service providers and personnel involved in data collection, reporting and analysis on how to use these nutrition information tools. Integration and harmonization would, critically, allow for a central database within government that could be used for planning, decision-making and further research.

Regarding education, decades of conflict have decimated the education sector in South Sudan. The Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) has a mandate to rebuild the sector, and good data are a prerequisite to do so. MoGEI runs a Data and Statistics Unit (the Education Management Information System) under the Department of Research and Policy Planning, responsible primarily for conducting the national Annual Education Census (AEC) of all public and private educational establishments in the country, and for the Education Management Information System (EMIS). EMIS facilitates decision-making by collecting, processing, analyzing, storing and disseminating statistical information relating to education (unlike in the most recent AEC 2018, EMIS could not cover the whole country in 2015 and 2016 because of access limitations, making comparisons to be done only with the situation of 2012 and 2013, which was before the beginning of the conflict and a characteristically unique context). MoGEI also suffers from limitations on domestic financing, relying on funding from partners and donors, which has been key in sustaining data collection to date. The challenges are similar to those faced by other sectors: e.g. staff turnover, inadequate ICT capacity, poor-quality data due to paper-based collection methods, limited use of data, lack of funding, etc. The MoGEI has been

---

[202] NIS is like HMIS collected from health facilities/nutrition sites on monthly basis, and FSNMS is survey data conducted twice a year using a representative sample. NIS is also donor driven and monitored by nutrition cluster, MoH, UNICEF, WFP and other implementing partners.

able to publish regular statistical abstracts on education – most recently in 2018 (data for 2019 were collected, though no data were gathered in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

With regards to urbanization, despite explosive demographic growth and average infrastructure expansion, the urban explosion in the country (especially in Juba) has received little attention: no comprehensive assessment has been undertaken, as aggregated data are not available at national level. Another expression of this is the non-availability of maps except for Juba, Malakal and Wau. There is no record of a map repository, housing portal or housing survey data available at or to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning,[203] which not only hinders adequate land use planning and land inventory activities,[204] but undermines the elaboration of any plan for an urban observatory.[205]

With respect to displacement data, government institutions work closely with institutions such as the UN agencies, funds and programs to strengthen data collection and analysis for IDPs and refugees. For instance, entities such as the Commission for Refugees Affairs and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission receive assistance for the registration and documentation of refugees, asylum seekers and returnees, as well as for the identification of persons at the risk of statelessness and vulnerable IDPs.[206]

---

[203] Interview with Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, South Sudan. June, 2021
[204] Marongwe, Nelson. 2013. Land Administration Challenges in post Conflict South Sudan, p6
[205] Interview with Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, South Sudan. June, 2021
[206] UNHCR Operational Data Portal South Sudan (October 2021): https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/ssd

7. Financing landscape and opportunities

The landscape to finance sustainable development in South Sudan has evolved over time, hampered by corruption squandering oil revenues, conflict, oil prices, competing global priorities such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and (related to the last) the shrinking of some donors' contributions.

Figure 6 below shows how available resources have decreased very considerably since the country's civil war started in 2013, due to factors such as the reduced oil production associated with the conflict, the slump in oil prices or the COVID-19 pandemic, among others. In such circumstances, foreign direct investment (FDI) left, and net external financing only started to recover in 2020 upon the stabilization of the country's political situation. The country is highly dependent on official development assistance (heavily focused on social sectors such as education and health), which has remained stable over time.

Figure 6.
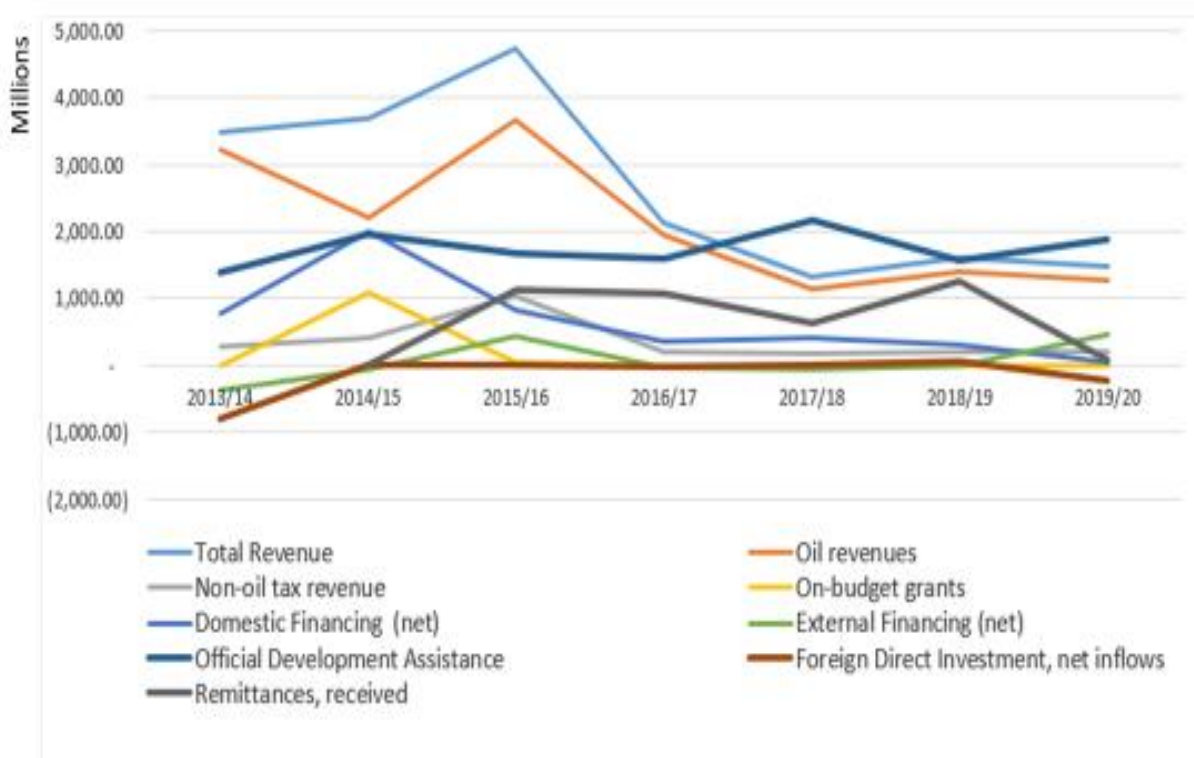
With ODA at USD170/capita in 2019, the country attracts funds that are significantly above the average of the Sub-Saharan Africa Region in 2019 (USD 50) and other low-income countries (USD 77). The main type of donors are DAC countries, who in 2019 were responsible for about 78% of all ODA – although there have been some oscillations, that percentage has decreased since the country achieved its independence in 2011 when it reached 89.3% (Table 2).

Table 2. Total aid (ODA) disbursements to South Sudan by donor category (US Dollar, millions, 2019)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
DAC Countries	346.1	993.7	1,081.1	1,582.9	1,416.3	1,323.1	1,747.8	1,364.3	1,318.3
Multilaterals	41.3	138.3	240.9	297.6	306.6	337.5	498.8	197.4	356.6
Non-DAC Countries	0.7	0.7	1.2	6.2	2.0	0.5	1.5	1.1	1.8
Private Donors	..	0.8	0.5	3.1	5.3	6.3	4.3	4.9	1.9

Source: Data extracted on 12 Oct 2021 06:04 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

Table 3. Total aid (ODA) disbursements to South Sudan by aid type (US Dollar, millions, 2019)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Grants	389.5	1,133.9	1,320.3	1,883.3	1,726.4	1,658.8	2,178.9	1,557.9	1,674.6
ODA Gross Loans	0.3	1.7	5.3	7.7	18.3	14.5	73.8	28.6	5.1
ODA Loans: Total Net	0.3	1.7	5.3	7.7	18.3	14.5	73.8	28.6	5.0
ODA: Total Net	388.1	1,132.7	1,323.3	1,886.6	1,724.9	1,661.1	2,248.1	1,562.7	1,676.7
Technical Cooperation	72.6	103.8	118.3	90.0	110.9	112.9	96.0	45.9	46.8
Development Food Aid	5.9	21.0	16.0	45.4	135.8	56.9	72.5	205.7	33.0
Humanitarian Aid	107.0	568.7	645.8	1,256.8	885.4	1,058.5	1,352.9	800.1	898.6
Imputed Multilateral ODA	47.9	125.9	232.6	260.7	275.0	302.4	399.4	183.0	279.7
Humanitarian Aid / Total Net	0.28	0.50	0.49	0.67	0.51	0.64	0.60	0.51	0.54

Source: Data extracted on 12 Oct 2021 06:04 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

Most ODA to South Sudan is given as grants by DAC countries (Table 3).[207] Humanitarian and short-term development needs have remained very high since the conflict started in 2013 (Table 3). Conflict was a very important driver of humanitarian needs (the highest was in 2014 and 2016), and with the signature of the R-ARCSS the share of ODA that went to humanitarian aid

---

[207] The list of Development Assistance Committee of the OECD is composed of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.

decreased to 51% in 2018. However, in a context of recurrent (and more frequent because of climate change) crises such as droughts or floods, the weak capacity to mobilize resources (external and internal) and use them efficiently, translated in real hardship to finance even the most urgent needs. Humanitarian needs only 58% of the 2020 HRP could be financed, which clearly highlights that not all the humanitarian needs can be financed.

The fact that it is so difficult to find financial resources means, since by definition 'humanitarian' needs are more urgent and life-saving in nature, that 'development' interventions may not always be a priority (in view of this, it might not be entirely surprising that the GoSS has not yet effectively domesticated the SDGs). There may not be a tradeoff, though, because most aid actors tend to focus on either humanitarian *or* development *or* peace, i.e. there are few stakeholders whose resources are fully fungible. For those actors who do have some fungible financial resources, it is important to avoid a trade-off between 'humanitarian' and 'development' and that can be done finding synergies between both types of interventions, e.g. respond to humanitarian crises in cooperation with Government[208], so that capacity can be built and parallel systems diminish over time.

With regards to national resources, domestic financing decreased over time owing mostly to the institutional deterioration (and ensuing corruption) associated to the conflict. South Sudan's tax system is generally weak, and mobilization of non-oil tax revenue remains a challenge. The country has an above-average share of total revenue as a share of GDP compared to other oil-exporting countries, but one of the lowest shares of non-oil tax revenue in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, with less than 4%.[209] Despite these weaknesses performance, in 2021 has been remarkably better than in previous years and the National Revenue Authority (NRA) is involved in a series of reforms to improve even further. The country will have to gradually shift from an oil dominated revenue base to an increasing share of non-oil revenue.

Domestic resources remain the primary source to finance the NDS. Preliminary "low" estimates of the resources required for the GoSS to implement the country's NDS 2021/2023 range from $2.5 to 2.8 billion per year and are considerably much higher than the country's resource envelope.[210] Liberating sufficient resources for the expansion of crucial services, infrastructure and other growth enhancing expenditures remains a top priority.

National Budget

For the fiscal year 2021/2022 there has been an increase in the collective Social Sector Budget ceilings from 8% in 2020 to 28% for FY 2021-2022. The Education Sector Ceiling has increased from an 11% budget share in FY 2020-2021 to 17% in FY 2021-2022. Although it is positive that the allocation share has increased, this falls short of the government's commitment to the Incheon Declaration 2015 whereby at least 15-20% of total public expenditure should be for the education sector.

---

[208] Most donors do not transfer aid funds to the GoSS due to its weak public financial management systems.
[209] South Sudan ranked last after Nigeria and the Union of Comoros (IMF 2020)
[210] In 20/21 the country's resource envelope was USD 1.35 billion.

After three years of the health sector receiving an average of 1.5% of the budget, the FY 2021-2022 ceiling has been increased to a 10% share of the budget. Similarly, this is a positive evolution, but it does not meet the goal of the Abuja Declaration whereby 15% of the national budget should be allocated to the health sector.

Furthermore, the Budget for Social and Humanitarian Affairs has decreased from an already low 1.83% share in 2019/2020 to 1% in FY 2021-2022. The failure to allocate more national resources toward social sectors is graver considering that actual budget allocations usually differ greatly from the 'official' budget allocations. For instance, while the security sector was allocated a 19% share of the national budget, it received a 41% share in the first nine months of the 2018/2019 fiscal year.[211] Conversely, the education sector, which had been allocated a 9.4% share of the total budget, had only received 2.4% in the same period. The social and humanitarian affairs sector was the only other sector to receive more than its budget share, with an expenditure share of 6.5%, compared to its budget allocation of 0.28%.[212]

Building sustainable domestic financing of nationally-led efforts to promote GEWE is also important, though not likely to be achieved in the short to medium term due partly to lack of financial investments in GEWE. In the national budget FY2020/2021 only SSP 697 million (approximately 0.32% of the total budget) was allocated to the MGCSW, and the draft GRSS annual budget FY2021/2022 allocates only 0.17% of the budget to MGCSW. There are no estimates of national expenditures on GEWE across other sectors in which GEWE-related programs are available, but the figure is likely to be low. The government dependence on international financing, both multilateral and bilateral remains high for GEWE initiatives. Despite this, an important initial step has been taken by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MFEP) to undertake gender-responsive budgeting (GRB).

In addition to divergences in budget and funds received, actual budget expenditure (outturns) is also very different than planned. For example, in the first nine months of FY2018/19 for the education sector of 28%, implying less than one third of the budget had been spent; other sectors' execution rates were also reported as low, with health at 22%, infrastructure at 27% and rural development at 42%.[213]

Opportunities for leveraging SDG financing

Potential opportunities for leveraging SDG financing may include, away from traditional ODA, sources of financing which may be considered as innovative *in the context of South Sudan*. Thus, the country may continue building on its national structures to mobilize national resources, as well as spend them more efficiently in the national priorities – notably basic services.

Furthermore, remittances are very important for many households given displacement (within the country or abroad), and the development of mobile money would make such money transfers safer and cheaper. The total inflow of remittances to South Sudan is estimated to represent 6.7 per cent of

---

[211] World Bank (2020). "South Sudan Economic Update: Poverty and vulnerability in a fragile environment", as reported in UNICEF and Ministry of General Education and Instruction (2020).
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.

the national GDP in 2019.[214] Remittances have been used to support South Sudanese families living in South Sudan and surrounding countries, such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Diasporas in Australia have been active in making contributions to South Sudan especially in responding to the crisis through fundraising, invest in their communities through small community projects, and assist families to respond to household needs including education. Whilst the findings suggest a significant contribution made by diasporas through remittances, there are persisting challenges to make this contribution long-lasting. Some of the challenges include lack of security assurance which is prominent for creating a positive business investment climate, the high transaction cost of remittances amounting 9.66 % which is the highest in the region, and lack of connection between diasporas and the government of South Sudan.[215]

Mobile money would also 'grease' the economy, along with basic financial development such as opening bank accounts, which would have positive repercussions such as boosting access to credit or improving the efficiency of monetary policy, respectively.

It would also be useful to offer incentives for the South Sudanese diaspora to invest in development projects and properties in South Sudan. For instance, there is evidence that many South Sudanese in the diaspora invest in property and businesses in towns and cities in neighboring countries such as Kenya and Uganda; if these resources were invested in South Sudan, it would promote urban growth and increase remittances to the country.

It is also very important to consolidate peace and ensure a return to political stability, since doing so will bring in a revival of FDI beyond the oil sector – which in turn may also have positive externalities, including job creation, increased competitiveness, etc.

Given the current trends of South Sudan's increased vulnerability to climate change, the country may also mobilize resources for climate change – especially with a view to reduce the effects of climate change – induced climatic phenomena (e.g. floods, droughts).

In sum, there is a need for stronger partnerships across all partners that can have a positive influence in mobilizing resources for sustainable development (be they financial, human, knowledge, etc.). This would allow the country to muster all the available resources and catalyze economic transformation – vital in areas such as the development of the financial sector, which is responsible for channeling savings on to investment and currently is very little developed for reasons such as the perception of cattle to accumulate wealth.

---

[214] IOM (2021).
[215] https://southsudan.iom.int/media-and-reports/press-release/government-south-sudan-and-iom-launch-policy-research-report

8. Commitments under international norms and standards

Overall Situation

Broadly speaking, and despite some public pledges,[216] the country is yet to commit, ratify and implement many relevant international norms and standards that are very important for the 2030 Agenda.[217] For instance, in the area of employment and decent work, South Sudan has had only seven ratifications (all in 2012 before the conflict started)[218] and over 70 conventions and protocols are yet to be ratified.[219]

The main reasons for such slow commitment, ratification and implementation of international norms and standards relate to the country's 'short age' (South Sudan gained independence on 9 July 2011 and became a member of the United Nations on 14 July 2011[220]). Adding to that, conflict broke out in 2013 and continued, intermittently, until 2018. Such elements, in a country which had extremely weak institutions to start with, eroded the country's capacity to undertake basic legislative functions – along their implementation, monitoring, etc.[221]

---

[216] In November 2019, at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD@25 the South Sudan government made an overarching commitment to 'Fully implement the R-ARCSS, silence guns and bring sustainable peace as a foundation for any meaningful development'. It also committed to the overall goals of zero preventable maternal deaths; zero unmet need for contraceptives and zero harmful practices including child marriage as well as drawing on demographic diversity to drive economic growth and achieve sustainable development; upholding the right to sexual and reproductive health care for people affected by humanitarian crisis; putting in place a progressive legal and policy framework for addressing the barriers to provision of SRHR and GBV prevention, and respond to and mobilize the required financing support to finish the ICPD Programme of Action and sustain the gains already made.

[217] Despite the mentioned delays, it is notable that the Government is a party to most of the relevant international treaties and frameworks enshrining the rights of women and children. These include:

o   UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified in 2008
o   UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified in 2014 (South Sudan has drafted its first CEDAW report)
o   Beijing Platform for Action +25 Report (most recent national review of implementation, conducted in 2020);
o   UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (South Sudan National Action Plan (SSNAP) 2015-2020 in place, and Review Report validated in March 2021); and the regional IGAD NAP.
o   Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women (known as the Maputo Protocol), ratified in 2017 with several reservations to key provisions, including: Article 6 which discourages polygamous marriages, and Article 14 on reproductive rights, family planning and abortion.[217]
o   ILO Conventions 111 and 100 relating to non-discrimination and equal pay, although other conventions relating to family commitments and maternity pay are not yet ratified.
o   Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Gender Strategy.

Other international and regional legal frameworks that the Government has committed to but need to be actively encouraged and supported to translate into national action include: African Union (AU) Agenda 2063; East African Community (EAC) Gender Policy, 2018; EAC Child Policy, 2016; and Intergovernmental Authority and Development (IGAD) Regional Action Plan, 2013.

[218] ILO (2021) Information System on International Labour Standards. Ratifications for South Sudan. Available at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:2697100

[219] ILO (2021). Information System on International Labour Standards. Up-to-date Conventions and Protocols not ratified by South Sudan. Available at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11210:0::NO:11210:P11210_COUNTRY_ID:2697100

[220] UNdata. Available at https://data.un.org/en/iso/ss.html

[221] There are some exceptions. For instance, in 2016 South Sudan ratified three of the UNESCO's Culture Conventions: i) Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, ii) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and iii) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Impact on Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

The consequences of having most legislative processes suspended for years and not ratifying international standards that are very important for the 2030 Agenda hampers their implementation. In turn, this has a very negative effect on addressing the structural challenges to protect those who are left behind. For example, the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), process that started in 2015, has not been achieved to-date. Other international instruments signed or committed to by the Government of South Sudan to address issues of PWDs include the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, the Continental Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities in Africa adopted by the African Union, or the Convention on Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines.[222] There are many other similar examples in the areas relating to those most vulnerable: women, children and youth, the elderly, IDPs, refugees and PWDs.

The factors that have led the country to have considerable delays in the legislative processes (i.e. short age, long-lasting conflict and violence and very weak institutional capacity) are structural, and therefore difficult to fix in the short term. However, progress can be made by setting up the fundamental institutional structures that will allow the country to catch up. In this regard, it is very positive that a new parliament was set up in May 2021, and hopefully the pace may pick up now that its members have been sworn in. An acceleration of such legislative processes would boost the country's ability to reverse the trends it is showing in its path towards the SDGs.

---

[222] The GoSS was granted an extension to this Treaty in November 2020. This means that if security and funding continue being assured, the country is on track to meet its obligations, and be free from known anti-personnel mines contamination by 2026.

9. Cross-boundary, regional and subregional perspectives

The cross-boundary perspective is very important of South Sudan, and this is visible in geopolitical, economic, and humanitarian spheres:

Geopolitical

South Sudan is a United Nations (UN) member state, a member state of the African Union (AU), of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and of the East African Community (EAC). In July 2012, South Sudan signed the Geneva Conventions.[223] South Sudan has also applied to join the Commonwealth of Nations, considering that it was part of the British Empire, and has two Commonwealth Republics, Kenya and Uganda as neighboring states.[224]

South Sudan's NDS notes "Overlaying the civil war and local resource-based conflicts are regional interests. The cross-border interest has been pursued through intermittent military transgression alongside longer-term proxies taking advantage of local grievances and ethnic bias. This means that the politically ambitious and/or embattled in South Sudan are easily able to find support from neighboring states seeking to pursue their own power agendas. This regional dimension of the South Sudan conflict will play a determining role in the future development and transformation of South Sudan. Being a landlocked country will always increase the level of risk of instability in South Sudan with different parts of the country having cross-border relationships with neighboring states and peoples. Additionally, with the need to export oil via at least one neighboring state, there are deeply embedded regional interests, which have long-historical legacies as well as national political implications. To the extent that regional politics influence the South Sudan conflict, national development plans must consider a regional strategy for stability." [225]

Implementation and monitoring of the R-ARCSS has a strong regional dimension, since it is done in coordination with regional structures such as the IGAD, the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), the AU, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), other entities of the United Nations, and countries in the region to continue engaging with South Sudanese leaders.[226] IGAD has also promoted and supported the development of durable solution strategy for refugees, returnees and IDPs in collaboration with development partners.

Several specific issues may be analyzed when considering South Sudan and each of its neighbors bilaterally. Notably, there is a pending issue with Sudan over Abyei, which is a special administrative area and has the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). However, the relationship seems to be improving between the two countries: in August 2021, Juba and Khartoum agreed to open border crossings and trade nearly after more than 11 years since closure.[227] There are also

---

[223] https://www.eac.int/eac-partner-states/south-sudan
[224] https://www.eac.int/eac-partner-states/south-sudan
[225] Republic of South Sudan (2018). "National Development Strategy: Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy"
[226] Having said this, many of the countries within the region continue to have their own internal political concerns, which may prevent them from being as fully involved in the R-ARCSS implementation process or cause them to seek to advance their own political interests rather than the best interests of South Sudan.
[227] https://eyeradio.org/s-sudan-sudan-border-opens-after-11-years-of-closure/

important connections with other countries such as Uganda or Ethiopia, on topics such as those related to the large numbers of South Sudanese that fled the country as refugees, those vulnerable to human trafficking, potential cooperation on remittances, etc.

Economic

In the economic sphere, the AU established the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to create a single continent-wide market for goods and services and to promote the movement of capital and natural persons. Given its oil dependence, South Sudan's trade with global trading partners may not change much in the short term. However, the AfCFTA has the potential to make trade with other partners more accessible and attractive, which may help diversify the country's economy. This is visible in the structure of South Sudan's trade, keeping in mind that Intra-Africa trade is generally concentrated within regional economic communities such as the East African Community (EAC) - of which South Sudan is member. The main exports are oil to China, while the main imports are vehicles, medicines and food from Uganda.[228]

Also linked to being part of the EAC, South Sudan recently reached agreements with Kenya to remove visa fees, which should facilitate movement of capital and promote employment and remittances.

In 2020, the 'Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region' was drafted covering free movement of persons (labor, IDPs, refugees), trade, rights of residence and right of establishment. South Sudan signed the communiqué approving the roadmap to ratify the protocol and nationalize the instrument., but the country is still in the process of ratifying it.

Another economic opportunity that may be further developed relates to triangular cooperation. There have been a few initiatives such as the g7+, a group of countries of which South Sudan is a member, which share knowledge and lessons on natural resource management.[229]

Furthermore, between 2011 and 2015, the Regional Initiative for Civil Service Capacity Enhancement in South Sudan, established by the Government of South Sudan in partnership with Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and other stakeholders and donors.

Humanitarian and Social

In the humanitarian sphere, the African Capacity Building Centre (ACBC) was established by IOM with a mandate to help build national capacities and shape innovative solutions in migration and border management.[230]

---

[228] Details provided in the section on Poverty, Employment, Private Sector and Trade
[229] South-South in Action: South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Peace and Development. United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (2019).
[230] South-South in Action: South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Peace and Development. United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (2019).

From a cross-boundary perspective, the Government needs to consider and address vulnerabilities that women and girls face along the border, including risks of cross-border TIP for forced labor and sexual exploitation. [231] Boys are also victims of cross-border TIP.

Movements of asylum seekers, refugees, and refugee returns are covered under the 1957 Refugee Conventions and its Protocols. In line with the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), the IGAD Support Platform for the GCR plays a key role in regional refugee issues as it is a mechanism to sustain the momentum and galvanize additional support for the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as subsequent Declarations and Plans of Action (all referred to as "the IGAD Process") for refugees in the region.[232]

---

[231] IOM 2020
[232] GCR- IGAD Support Platform: https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/support-platforms

10. Risk Analysis

This section consists of a risk analysis that includes their identification, likelihood, potential impact and mitigation measures:

The most important risk for South Sudan relates to the implementation of the peace R-ARCSS: it could slow down, stall or be reverted. The consequences of these scenarios would vary accordingly, ranging from a delay in the transition process and the postponement of democratic elections, to a return of armed conflict. This could happen due several reasons which may not be easy to forecast. For instance, it is unclear what will happen in the political sphere regarding the leadership of the SPLM-IO, one of the signatories of the R-ARCSS. Hence, it is not easy to assess the likelihood of such events, e.g. South Sudanese have conflict 'fatigue' and wish their country to be stable and in peace. On the other hand, democratic elections are a form of 'confrontation' at the polls. Given that South Sudan has very little experience in holding voting exercises, the risk of old animosities returning might rise as elections approach. What seems clear though, given the many years of conflict in the country, the wide availability of weapons and the precarious conditions (humanitarian crisis, poverty, etc.), is that should the conflict be revived, the consequences would be extremely negative (e.g. in the form of more displacements, forced recruitment, sexual exploitation and abuse even by aid delivery staff, etc.). To monitor this risk, it will be very important to closely watch the political evolution in the country as elections approach. To reduce it, it may be very useful to offer international assistance in the preparation and holding of elections, so as to give credibility to the process.

Relatedly, another risk would be a stronger and accelerated escalation of sub-national violence. This risk would in principle be independent of national elections approaching, and possibly linked to more ongoing grievances which communities must endure such as lack of jobs, poverty, inflation, land disputes, etc. An expression of this may be the formation of youth gangs, indulging in criminal activities such as theft, burglary, narcotics, smuggling, etc. Land ownership disputes raise the risk of violence in urban settings, particularly in cities with high number of IDPs, IDP returnees and refugee returnees; high number of relocations (specifically urban migration); high number of informal settlements and reported lack of land allocated for returnees, among others.[233] In principle the consequences would be more gradual and localized – depending on the area where violence escalates. However, they would be similar: sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, etc. which affect the most vulnerable groups and therefore may compound vulnerability layers leading to more IDPs and/or refugees, more children dropping out of school, more SEA, GBV, etc. In turn, this could turn into a vicious cycle, i.e. more people have been victim and are more vulnerable, poorer, etc. and as a result they decide to incur in illegal and violent activities. To monitor this risk, it will be very important to closely watch the indicators of local violence. To reduce it, it may be very useful to improve the provision of public basic services and start wider consultations where local communities can voice their concerns – to address such concerns more efficiently.

---

[233] According to a recent UNHCR household survey conducted between July-September 2021, 90% of returnee households stated that they own land; while 22% of returnee households do not have access to it, mainly because it is occupied by others, due to insecurity or other reasons. The survey also showed that 96% of returnee households stated that they feel safe in their current location and that 79% of returnee households reported good relationship with the host community. Source: UNHCR South Sudan refugee Household Survey Dashboard (Jul-Sept 2021): https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89370

A more indirect risk is economic: South Sudan's economy relies heavily on oil, which makes it vulnerable to fluctuations of its price, prone to corruption and does not promote jobs for the general population. If the country keeps developing the oil sector and that is not accompanied by an equal advancement of the non-oil sector (including through increased collection of non-oil revenue by the NRA), reliance on oil would be exacerbated. This would mean that one of the main needs of the country, i.e. economic diversification, is shifting away with the consequent increased vulnerability in a number of areas (e.g. commodity prices, corruption in the PFM system, etc.). In that situation, high increases or reductions in oil price could have very pernicious consequences for the country. To monitor this risk, it is important to closely watch the indicators relating to oil prices and production. To reduce it, it is important to accelerate the implementation of PFM reforms, and especially to continue improving mobilization of non-oil revenue.

Another significant economic risk relates to the availability of financial resources for development. This risk can be driven by several factors that may 'compete' for the resources South Sudan receives. For instance, since 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has put considerable financial strain in high-income countries. More recently, the recent rise of humanitarian crises in countries such as Ethiopia, Haiti or Afghanistan could divert resources previously coming here. Independently, but adding to those factors, there may be some 'donor fatigue' due to the slow progress of the R-ARCSS in South Sudan, which could also have a significant dent in the amount of finance the country receives. To monitor this risk, it'll be important to have a fluid communication and collaboration with donors. To mitigate it, it'll be important to show a true political will in the pursuit of tangible results.

A fifth risk, which has grown in recent years relates to natural disasters including floods, droughts, etc. This would also be a more gradual risk, though with high probability and high potential consequences: South Sudan's growing vulnerability to climate change has been greatly accelerated in a period of 20 years. Should that pace continue, and the country's environmental concerns not be addressed, this may have heavy direct consequences in other areas (food security, violence, etc. as per the environmental linkages already explained). To monitor this risk, it will be very important to closely watch indicators connecting climate change phenomena such as floods or droughts and their effects on communities. To reduce it, it may be useful to offer international assistance for the development of infrastructure (e.g. dykes, dams) and systems (e.g. early warning systems) specific to it.

An additional risk could be a deterioration of the geopolitical relations between South Sudan and any of its neighbors – or even the neighbors' situation (e.g. Ethiopia is currently involved in an internal conflict). Based on the current status (e.g. improvement with Sudan) that risk seems unlikely in the near future. The potential effects of such scenario would depend on the nature and actors involved. However, it seems reasonable to assume that it could have a very severe impact on the movements of people (e.g. refugees), which already have very high numbers.

Finally, another risk could be the deterioration of the COVID-19 pandemic due to, for example, the emergence of new strains that can have a stronger impact on South Sudanese population. It is difficult to assess the probability of such risk, but in case it happened, its impact would probably important given the very slow deployment and coverage of vaccines.

11. Conclusion

South Sudan faces serious challenges in all areas of sustainable development, which have been comprehensively described and analyzed in this document. Indeed, at present it may be easy to have the feeling that everything is urgent and that becomes evident when talking to people working in different sectors and inquiring "What should be the top priority intervention?". The answer is often "this area is the most important priority, as per indicator X, Y or Z".

Emerging challenges (e.g. climate change) amplify other existing ones which are rooted in decades-long conflicts. The several waves of shocks experienced by the country have led to several traumatic consequences for a large share of the population, which in turn can continue reinforcing negative behavior patterns at present. This is accompanied by perceptions of high discount rates, or a generally strong focus on the short run which generally leads to low investment rates (e.g. in agriculture, education, etc.)

Adding to the magnitude of the challenges, resource scarcity (including financial resources, but also human capital, institutions, etc.) to address all the urgent needs of the country is severe, which necessarily implies weighty tradeoffs.

In a society of such high complexity and intertwined relationships, where people have to fend for themselves and rely on their community because they cannot count on the State for basic services, and where many factors change very often (e.g. communities being displaced, climate change induced floods, conflict or violence), the multiplicity of interrelationships or factors that affect other factors is very high, which makes for a very complex picture. These interrelationships are a key factor for public policy to keep in mind in the pursuit of sustainable development, even more so in view of so many urgent priorities and such limited resources. This is also more accentuated than, say, in countries much less affected by climate change, conflict, and where citizens can rely on the State for their healthcare, education and pension.

Interrelationships can be positive, e.g. as synergies between sustainable development dimensions (e.g. economic, social, environment); the triple nexus spheres (peace, humanitarian, development); or vulnerability layers that overlap on the beneficiaries' side. Interrelationships can also be negative, as tradeoffs between time (e.g. short vs longer term); or capacity to implement in partnership with national entities (e.g. efficiency vs ownership).

The synergies and tradeoffs involved in public policy interventions to pursue sustainable development should be thoroughly understood. Notably, in the context of South Sudan, the triple nexus can be construed as a 'compass', for peace broadly speaking (including rule of law, lack of violence and conflict) is a prerequisite for people to invest in their future. For example, when there is conflict or violence and people worry about their lives or are afraid of losing all they have, they will hardly invest in farming. In turn, this contributes to the agricultural supply chain not being developed even despite the country's fertile land and forces people to depend on food aid (which has knock-on effects on other areas). Hence, the peace pillar in the triple nexus approach is vital for people to move the focus from short-term interventions towards medium/longer time horizons. In this way, peacebuilding will provide a bridge between humanitarian and development initiatives.

Understanding synergies and tradeoffs between interventions also forces us to answering questions such as "how will an intervention in this area affect that other area?". For example, it is well known that more educated women favor their children being more educated, or that increasing their political decision making translates in more funds being allocated to social sectors. Having the answer to such 'micro' question for all the areas would help us respond to a more 'macro' question: "What are the policy levers that bring about the smallest tradeoffs and can actually turn them into synergies?". In this regard, there is abundant evidence that basic services such as education, healthcare or water and sanitation are absolute pillars that must be guaranteed for the South Sudanese in the pursuit of sustainable development – always with peace as a prerequisite. This is clearly reinforced by the fact that these are the revised national priorities identified in the National Development Strategy Review, a central element to allocate more national budget resources towards the country's priorities.

The transition from short to medium term focus can be fostered and accelerated thanks to optimizing synergies and tradeoffs. This forms the backbone of the much-needed shift from more "humanitarian" activities towards more "development". In terms of implementation across the three dimensions, and keeping in mind certain signs of donor fatigue, this shift must be facilitated by two vectors of change: institutional development and capacity development. Due to the extremely weak (and deteriorating over time) national capacity to undertake basic government functions, national institutions should be built and/or considerably strengthened over time, both at national, state and local level. At national level, there is an urgent need for basic systems, data and information that can facilitate the provision of basic public services (e.g. undertaking a census, improving the national budget systems). At decentralized levels, capacity building can adopt principles (and replicate or scale up initiatives) that have proven to be effective, such as area-based programming.

Indeed, capacity building of South Sudanese institutions (both at national and decentralized levels) is crucial for several reasons: the country is based on a federal system, and for the country to deliver its side of a 'social contract' it must be able to do so. Furthermore, this would favor evolving away from the current situation, shifting the burden of delivering basic public services from donors, civil society, and other stakeholders to national institutions and Government.

12. Annexes

Annex 1. List of institutional structures consulted

AfriYAN - Africa Youth and Adolescent Network on Population and Development
BEATEC
Bilateral donors – Heads of Cooperation Group
Canadian International Development Agency
CEFORD - Community Empowerment for Rehabilitation and Development
CESUVI - Central Equatoria State Union of the Visually Impaired
Embassy of Germany
Embassy of Norway
Embassy of Sweden
Embassy of Switzerland
Embassy of the United Kingdom
Embassy of Turkey
Government of South Sudan – Sector Working Groups
HOPED - Halla Nil Organization for persons Disability
Juba University
NGO Forum
Shabab Le Shabab
South Sudan Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
South Sudan Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs
SSD Youth Organization Coalition/CAPAD
SSNYU - South Sudan National Youth Union
SSPI-Self Sustainable Plans Initiative
SSYOC - South Sudan Youth Organizations Coalition
UN Association of South Sudan
Union of Journalists
United Nations Country Team
United Nations Mission for South Sudan (UNMISS)
United Nations Programme Management Team
World Vision International
Writers Writing Fellowship
Young Positives South Sudan
Youth Coalition
Youth, Peace and Security Coalition

References

[1]. African Development Bank (2020). Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA). Available at https://cpia.afdb.org/?page=results&subpage=profile&indicator_id=A-E_&country_id=SS&year=2020

[2]. Anyango, Anita (2021). "Production of refined oil begins at Bentiu Oil Refinery in South Sudan". Pumps Africa, 5th April 2021. Available at https://pumps-africa.com/production-of-refined-oil-begins-at-bentu-oil-refinery-in-south-sudan/

[3]. Ebony Center (2021). "The Urgent Need of Creating a State in South Sudan". Ebony Center Policy Brief No. 2021-2, 31 May 2021.

[4]. Eckstein David, Kunzel Vera and Schafer Laura (2021). "Global Climate Risk Index 2021: Who Suffers Most from Extreme Weather Events? Weather-related Loss Events in 2019 and 2000-2019". German Watch Briefing Paper. Available at https://germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_2.pdf

[5]. Finn Arden and von der Goltz Jan (2020). "Insights from Surveys on Business and Enterprises in South Sudan: Jobs, Recovery, and Peacebuilding in Urban South Sudan – Technical Report IV". Jobs Working Paper, Issue No. 53, World Bank.

[6]. Finn Arden et al. (2020). "Job Outcomes in the Towns of South Sudan: Jobs, Recovery, and Peacebuilding in Urban South Sudan – Technical Report I". Jobs Working Paper, Issue No. 50, World Bank.

[7]. Fragile States Index (2021). Available at https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/

[8]. Government of South Sudan / Ministry of Finance and Planning (2021). "National Development Strategy Review).

[9]. IGAD (2018). "Revitalized Agreement on The Resolution of The Conflict In The Republic Of South Sudan (R–ARCSS)"

[10]. ILO and DPPA (2021). "Sustaining peace through decent work and employment". International Labour Organization and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_771498.pdf

[11]. IMF (2021). IMF Country Report No. 21/70. STAFF-MONITORED PROGRAM AND REQUEST FOR DISBURSEMENT UNDER THE RAPID CREDIT FACILITY— PRESS RELEASE; STAFF REPORT; AND STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN.

[12]. IMF (2021). Staff-Monitored Program and Request for Disbursement Under the Rapid Credit—Debt Sustainability Analysis. March 17, 2021

[13]. IMF (2021). Press Release No. 21/94. Available at https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/03/31/pr2194-south-sudan-imf-execboard-approves-us-174-2m-emergency-assistance-address-covid19

[14]. IOM (2021). "Displacement Tracking Matrix".

[15]. IOM (2021). Mobility Tracking Round 9 Initial Findings. Available at https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-mobility-tracking-round-9-initial-findings

[16]. IOM (2021). South Sudan Displacement Tracking Matrix — Mobility Tracking Round 10 Initial Findings. Available at https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-mobility-tracking-round-10-initial-findings?close=true

[17]. IOM South Sudan (2021). EVENT TRACKING AND RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN PIBOR TOWN – As of 24 May 2021. Available at https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-pibor-event-tracking-and-rapid-assessment-report-may-2020#

[18]. Jayaraj, Vijay (2021). "Oil May Hold Key to Reviving South Sudan's War-Torn Economy". CNS News Commentary, 20th May 2021. Available at https://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/vijay-jayaraj/oil-may-hold-key-reviving-south-sudans-war-torn-economy

[19]. JMEC (2018). "Summary of The Revitalized Agreement on The Resolution of The Conflict In The Republic Of South Sudan (R–ARCSS)"

[20]. Mawejje Joseph (2020). "The Macroeconomic Environment for Jobs in South Sudan: Jobs, Recovery, and Peacebuilding in Urban South Sudan – Technical Report II". Jobs Working Paper, Issue No. 51, World Bank.

[21]. National Bureau of Statistics. "South Sudan Population Projections 2020-2040". July 2016.

[22]. NUPI and SIPRI (2021). "Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet: South Sudan". Available at https://www.nupi.no/en/News/Climate-Peace-and-Security-Fact-Sheet-South-Sudan

[23]. OCHA (2021). "South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021".

[24]. OCHA (2021). "South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021".

[25]. IOM (2021). "Remittances and Diaspora Engagement in South Sudan: A Policy Research with a Focus on South Sudanese Community in Australia".

[26]. Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Finance and Planning, and United Nations South Sudan (2017). "South Sudan Inaugural SDG Report".

[27]. Republic of South Sudan (2018). "National Development Strategy: Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy". Available at http://www.mofep-grss.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NDS-4-Print-Sept-5-2018.pdf

[28]. Trias Consulting (2021). "Sustaining Peace in South Sudan: Peace and Conflict Analysis and Opportunities for the UN Peacebuilding Fund". Study commissioned by the United Nations in South Sudan.

[29]. The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2020): "Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2020". Kigali and New York: SDG Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Available at https://sdgcafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020_africa_index_and_dashboards.pdf

[30]. UN (2021). "Assessment of the UNCF 2020".

[31]. UN (2021). "SDG Data Landscaping Analysis".

[32]. UN (2021). "Sustaining Peace in South Sudan: Peace and Conflict Analysis and Opportunities for the UN Peacebuilding Fund"

[33]. UN (2021). "Sustaining Peace in South Sudan: Peace and Conflict Analysis and Opportunities for the UN Peacebuilding Fund".

[34]. United Nations (2019). South-South in Action: South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Peace and Development. United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (2019). Available at https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UNOSSC-PeaceAndDevelpment_web.pdf

[35]. UN Environment (2018). "South Sudan: First State of Environment and Outlook Report 2018". Available at https://www.unep.org/resources/report/south-sudan-first-state-environment-and-outlook-report-2018

[36]. UN Environment (2021). https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/disasters-conflicts/where-we-work/south-sudan/community-forestry#:~:text=South%20Sudan%20is%20well%20endowed,prolonged%20conflict%20affecting%20the%20country.

[37]. UNdata (2021). Available at https://data.un.org/en/iso/ss.html

[38]. UNDP (2020). "Human Development Index 2020". Available at http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi

[39]. UNDP (2021). "Fragility Assessment in South Sudan".

[40]. UNDP (2021). "Integrated National Financing Framework".

[41]. UNHCR (2021). "Regional overview of the South Sudanese refugee population". 2021 South Sudanese Regional RRRP as of 30 April 2021. Available at https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/62?sv=5&geo=0

[42]. UNHCR South Sudan refugee Household Survey Dashboard (Jul-Sept 2021). Available at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89370

[43]. UNICEF (2021). "The Situation of Children and Women in South Sudan 2018–2020".

[44]. UNICEF (2021). "Public Expenditure Review".

[45]. UNICEF (2021). "Public Expenditure Tracking Survey"

[46]. UNICEF (2021). "The Situation of Children in South Sudan – UNICEF 2020 Annual Report". March 2021. Available at https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/reports/situation-children-south-sudan-2020

[47]. UNICEF and Ministry of Finance and Planning (2021). "Citizens' Draft Budget 2020/2021 South Sudan". Available at https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/7416/file/South-Sudan-Citizens-Draft-Budget-FY2020-2021.pdf

[48]. UNICEF and Ministry of General education and Instruction (2020). "Education Budget Brief 2019/2020". Available at https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/reports/education-budget-brief-20192020

[49]. UNICEF/WHO/World Bank joint child malnutrition estimates. Available at https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/#:~:text=Between%202000%20and%202020*%2C%20stunting,lived%20in%20sub%2DSaharan%20Africa.

[50]. United Nations Security Council (2021). "Final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan submitted pursuant to resolution 2521 (2020)". Available https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2021_365.pdf

[51]. United Nations South Sudan (2020). "UN Socio-Economic Response Plan to COVID-19 in South Sudan". Available at

[52]. USAID (2019). SOUTH SUDAN CLIMATE VULNERABILITY PROFILE: SECTOR- AND LOCATION-SPECIFIC CLIMATE RISKS AND RESILIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS. May 2019.

[53]. USAID (2019). "South Sudan Trauma Assessment: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations". Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WBJJ.pdf

[54]. von der Goltz Jan et al. (2020). "Reviving Markets and Market-Linked Agriculture in South Sudan: Jobs, Recovery, and Peacebuilding in Urban South Sudan – Technical Report III". Jobs Working Paper, Issue No. 52, World Bank.

[55]. WHO (2021). "South Sudan: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard". Available at https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ss

[56]. WHO (2021). Global Health Workforce Alliance. Available at

https://www.who.int/workforcealliance/countries/ssd/en/

[57]. WHO and IOM (2021). "South Sudan: Health Care Access for IDPs and Returnees".

[58]. World Bank (2019). Economy Profile of South Sudan. Doing Business 2020. World Bank, Washington, DC.

[59]. World Bank (2020). "South Sudan Economic Update: Poverty and vulnerability in a fragile environment".

[60]. World Bank (2021a). Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA). Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/cpia/country/south-sudan

[61]. Xinhuanet (2021). "South Sudan aims to start processing 7,000 barrels of oil in new refinery". Available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-02/05/c_139722018.htm#:~:text=%22The%20oil%20(Tharjath)%20refinery,by%20the%20end%20of%202021.