

South Sudan

We urge the UK Government to:

1. **Provide the needed funding and diplomatic support for peacebuilding**
2. **Provide additional funds to the humanitarian response in South Sudan**
3. **Urgently step up diplomacy in collaboration with the Troika (UK, USA, Norway), other governments and multilateral actors**
4. **Establish, through the FCDO, a clearly defined, long-term plan for aid to South Sudan**

Conflict in Sudan and impact on South Sudan

With the recent outbreak of conflict, the situation in Sudan remains highly unstable and has led to an **emerging humanitarian crisis on the South Sudan border, where over 130,000 returnees and refugees have already crossed**. Of this number, 93% are returnees. Organisations on the ground are acutely aware of the significant number of people displaced from Sudan requiring immediate support, on top of the already pressing humanitarian crises in South Sudan.

The South Sudanese government is not permitting the establishment of new camps to house these refugees and returnees, pushing them to return to their local regions. There is an acute lack of transport options on the South Sudanese border, **leaving people stranded in the open with extremely limited access to shelter, water and sanitation facilities and health services**. With the onset of the rainy season, the ability to transport supplies and deliver essential aid to border regions is particularly fragile and prices have already increased markedly. **As returnees make their way back to former landholdings, conflict over resources is anticipated to rise**.

On top of the humanitarian implications, **the Sudan conflict threatens to destabilise South Sudan's fragile progress towards peace**. Sudan is a key guarantor for South Sudan's peace process, and current chairing member of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Critical governance processes (including the 2024 elections and operationalisation of a unified national army) could easily fail to progress without dedicated financial and diplomatic support, including to grassroot peacebuilding efforts.

¹ Known as the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

² Known as the the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU).

The peace process in South Sudan

After South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011, civil war followed in late 2013, which cost the lives of an estimated 400,000 people and displaced around 4million within and across borders. Since then, the international community, most notably through the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), has endeavoured to mediate between the leadership of the parties to the conflict.

Protracted negotiation following a failed 2015 peace process led to a ceasefire in 2018 and produced a new peace agreement.¹ This included the formation of a new transitional government² in 2020 and provisions for drafting a new constitution, redrawing administrative boundaries, transitional justice, economic reform, and reunification of armed forces.

In August 2022, amidst on-going political tensions, President Kiir and Vice-President Machar agreed to extend the term of transitional government for 24 months to provide more time to implement the peace agreement and plan for elections.

Current humanitarian need in South Sudan

Even before the current conflict in Sudan, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan was dire, with an estimated **9.4 million people** expected to need humanitarian assistance in 2023.³ This is driven by a combination of South Sudan's own conflict, widespread flooding, food security, high food prices and a lack of basic services. This figure includes 2.2 million women and 4.9 million children. So far, **the UN Humanitarian**

³ WFP South Sudan Situation Report #310 (28 February 2023).

https://api.godocs.wfp.org/api/documents/87c6b6901d9a454295437b5583a24288/download/?_ga=2.144001205.1468551136.1682577982-727887998.1678280464

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Response Plan remains 72% underfunded.⁴ The UK government cut its budget for South Sudan by 59% in 2021.

An estimated **63% of the population (7.7 million people) face severe acute food insecurity**, at IPC Phase 3 or higher during the April–July 2023 lean season⁵. The arrival of returnees and refugees during lean season is adding pressure on limited resources and driving food needs in border areas, all of which are just one step away from famine conditions. Humanitarian funding for food in South Sudan has been cut by 38% since 2020. The impact of these cuts is that **some families receive just 50% of a full food ration**, leaving them teetering on the edge of famine as they struggle to find other sources of food.



“The situation was not good, so I decided to leave. When you leave your house, you sometimes meet fighting and crossfire and you have to go and hide, so it wasn’t easy to get out.”

29-year-old father of two Joseph (name changed) crossed the border with his wife and their two young sons on a cart carrying their belongings. Joseph is originally from Warrap state in South Sudan. He left Warrap in 2019 to go to Khartoum state in Sudan to study. Joseph and his family were living in an area northwest of Khartoum city when the fighting broke out.

Photo credit: Katie Cox

Adding to this complex situation, **flooding has submerged villages, causing widespread loss of homes and livestock and further displacement**. With their assets depleted, exhausted households turn to negative coping strategies.

⁴ UN OCHA Appeal Summary South Sudan <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1111/summary>

⁵ The IPC Acute Food Insecurity (IPC AFI) classification provides strategically relevant information to decision-makers that focuses on

Access to humanitarian assistance by communities in need is a frequent challenge in the absence of funding, national transport infrastructure and security. **South Sudan is the most dangerous country in the world to be an aid worker**, ahead of Afghanistan and Syria, with armed violence, bureaucratic impediments, and targeted crimes against humanitarian personnel, overwhelmingly national staff, commonplace.⁶



28-year-old Adut (name changed) pictured just after crossing with her family from Sudan into South Sudan at the Joda border crossing point. Adut’s family are originally from Abyei, another area on the border between the two countries, but they were living in Khartoum when the fighting broke out. Adut says: **“We came here out of fear because every day there is gunfire. We want to go to Renk so we can travel onwards to Abyei. Sudan is in bad shape, we don’t want to go back there ever again.”**

Photo credit: Silvano Yokwe

Support to South Sudanese civil society

Efforts to support national and local South Sudanese civil society organisations working in the most hard-to-reach parts of the country have also faced challenges. The percentage of **funding reaching local NGOs, especially women-led organisations, has dramatically reduced in recent years. The funding mechanism intended to shift power to local actors, by putting funds directly in their hands, has failed to do so.** Between 2017-2022 only \$2.8 million of funding for food security went directly

short-term objectives to prevent, mitigate or decrease severe food insecurity that threatens lives or livelihoods.

⁶ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1124962>

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to local and national actors, representing just 0.1% of all food sector funding.⁷

Impact on women and girls

Women and girls are bearing the brunt of conflict and extreme weather, reducing personal food consumption, carrying additional responsibility for sick family members and spending greater time and undertaking more arduous journeys in search of wild foods, water and firewood for survival. This reduces the opportunity to attend school and heightens the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Increased cases of sexual violence and harassment of women and girls have already been reported.

Christian Aid's work in South Sudan

Christian Aid works through local partners to implement programmes including emergency cash, support for livelihoods resumption (farming, fishing and income generation), support for community managed disaster risk reduction targeting resilience

building approaches against climatic and conflict related shocks, and support for peace and reconciliation. Christian Aid is working closely with the South Sudan Council of Churches to support grassroots peacebuilding and accountability efforts through their Action Plan for Peace.

In response to the recent influx of returnees from Sudan, Christian Aid's local partner Africa Development Aid is already on the ground responding. They are working to provide people with communal shelters as well identifying children who have become separated from their families when they fled Sudan and referring them onwards to other agencies working to reunite families.

Our partner Lutheran World Federation will be responding both inside and outside the transit centre in Renk. This includes providing cash to female-headed families so that they can buy food and other essentials, as well as three months' worth of 'dignity' kits containing soap and sanitary towels.

We urge the UK Government to:

- 1. Provide the needed funding and diplomatic support for peacebuilding**, from the grassroots to the political level. The dire humanitarian situation in South Sudan will never be resolved as long as the conflict continues. In the past, the FCDO funded successful peacebuilding programming, including a programme supporting the work of Christian Aid in partnership with the South Sudan Council of Churches, to support the grassroots. The UK should consider a return to this approach, and support the work of the churches to promote peace.
- 2. Provide additional funds to the humanitarian response in South Sudan;** recognising the influx of refugees from Sudan means there are additional people in need of life-saving assistance in a country with an already under-resourced humanitarian crisis. Despite the new challenges presented by the Sudan conflict, South Sudan received less funding this year. Funding should go to local organisations working in hard-to-reach areas and rooted in the communities affected by the crisis.
- 3. Urgently step-up diplomacy in collaboration with the Troika (UK, USA, Norway), other governments and multilateral actors** (African Union, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) to sustain and strengthen timely, transparent, and inclusive efforts by the government of South Sudan on implementation of the roadmap to the end of the transitional government. Ongoing challenges and delays in delivering on the 2018 peace process (Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)) represent a serious concern. The situation in Sudan must not distract from progress on these critical processes.
- 4. Establish, through the FCDO, a clearly defined, long-term plan for aid to South Sudan** which explains how UK aid will address root causes of the crisis and the vulnerability of people in South Sudan. Particular attention should be given to supporting resilience-building programmes that support food security.

⁷ Development Initiatives. Food Insecurity in South Sudan: Financing to local actors. (February 2023)
<https://assets.ctfassets.net/vy3axnuecuwj/4NOemEHMC8Mz7CaskRBU>

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