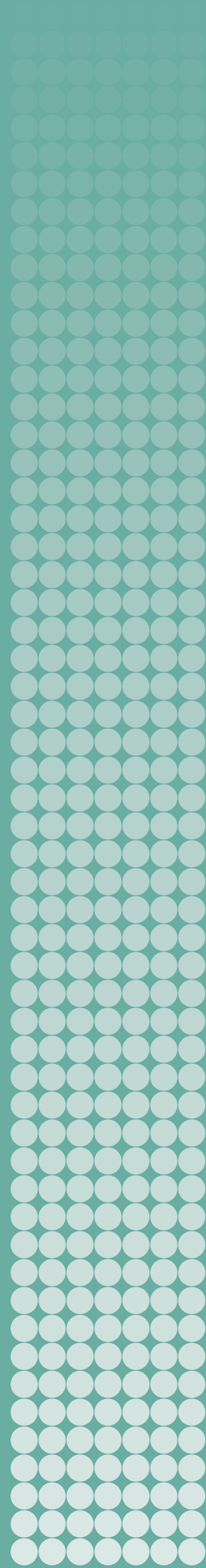


IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN

Spotlight on Measurement

MARIE RIQUIER



**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

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World Food Programme

June 2023

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Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the interlocutors at the World Food Programme's South Sudan country office, as well as to interlocutors at other United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, local partners and representatives of the South Sudanese government.

Deepest appreciation goes to Pauline Eloff (Conflict and Food Security Analyst, WFP South Sudan) and Jacob McCoy (Information Management Officer, WFP South Sudan) for their continuous engagement and support in the research process as well as for facilitating the field work. Gratitude also goes to all the reviewers at the country office who reviewed the last stages of the report and provided much appreciated guidance.

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Peter Allen (Programme Policy Officer) and Léa Knust (Programme Policy Officer) for facilitating the field work and the research process, as well as WFP Rome Headquarters for their continued feedback, engagement and patience.

The author also extends her sincere gratitude to the beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and local community leaders who shared their time and personal experiences with the SIPRI research team. This research is enhanced by their insights, which were central to refining our contextual understanding.

Finally, the author is grateful to the reviewers at SIPRI and the SIPRI Editorial Department for their efforts in improving early versions of the manuscript and for their unfailing patience.

The SIPRI–WFP Knowledge Partnership and Disclaimer

WFP and SIPRI established a knowledge partnership in 2018 to help strengthen WFP’s contribution to improving the prospects for peace in the countries where it works. The research for phase I of this partnership involved four case study states—El Salvador, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan and Mali—and produced initial findings in June 2019. The evidence from these case studies indicated that some WFP programming positively contributes to improving the prospects for peace, but also identified various issues that needed to be addressed. The preliminary report made a number of general and country-specific recommendations on how WFP’s contribution to improving the prospects for peace could be improved. However, further research was required to test the robustness and general applicability of the initial findings and recommendations, and to refine and add to them with more case studies. Accordingly, phase II of the inquiry was broadened by adding new states and deepened through a focus on five thematic areas.

Eight states were identified for research in phase II: Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. The five thematic areas are climate change, stabilization, gender, cash-based interventions and measurement. The research has inquired into and reported on these areas in all eight states, and there was also a deep dive in each country into one or two of the thematic areas. The South Sudan case study research focuses on two thematic areas: measurement and stabilization. The case study is divided into two reports that reflect the thematic areas which, although related, explore distinct processes and have different units of analysis. The first report (part I of the series) presents the findings from the stabilization deep dive, which explored the potential for WFP crisis and emergency response to contribute to a reduction in direct violence, enhance basic physical security and increase stability. Part II of the series presents the findings of the measurement deep dive, which explores how current monitoring systems, internal processes and data can be adapted to capture WFP’s contribution to improving the prospects for peace.

The findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions of SIPRI or WFP, or the management, executive directors or boards of these institutions. The authors alone are responsible for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
C2P	Contribution to Peace Strategy
CBT	Cash-based transfers
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CSAT	Conflict Security and Access Team
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
CSRf	Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility
CRF	Corporate Results Framework
CVR	Community Violence Reduction
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFA	Food for Assets
FSNMS	Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System
GFD	General food distribution
GPAA	Great Pibor Administrative Area
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MSS	Measuring Safety and Security
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PDM	Post-distribution Monitoring
PMC	Project Management Committee
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
RSRTF	Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPLMA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement in-opposition
TOC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

South Sudan has a history of armed conflict that predates its birth as the world's newest country in 2011. Promises of peace and unity born with South Sudan gave way to growing dissatisfaction and grievance among political actors and the wider population. This led to the eruption of civil war in 2013, which ended with a peace agreement in 2018. Despite the peace agreement, organized violence persisted at the subnational level, threatening the peace process. Unprecedented levels of food insecurity were reported at the time of this research in 2022. Conflict and ongoing organized violence have displaced more than 5 million people. The country is also vulnerable to the short- and long-term effects of climate change, which impact rural livelihoods.

A convergence of climate change and insecurity is having serious socio-economic implications, and livelihoods in South Sudan are caught up in a vicious circle. Humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate and 8.9 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, an increase of 600 000 on 2021.

The World Food Programme (WFP) was operating in South Sudan prior to independence and established a fully fledged country office there after 2011. In 2022, it provided food assistance to nearly 6 million people. Over 60 per cent of all the recipients who are intended to benefit from WFP programming, or 'beneficiaries', receive unconditional food assistance. This food assistance has direct and indirect impacts on peace and conflict dynamics.

This second of two reports analyses these impacts and identifies the contribution of WFP's programming to improving the prospects for peace in South Sudan. The focus is on measurement. Each of the two reports addresses one of the thematic areas. Although related, these thematic deep dives explore distinct processes and have different units of analysis.

WFP South Sudan seeks to launch processes that leverage its crisis and emergency response and resilience programming to contribute to improving the prospects for peace. It must therefore rely on clear objectives that can be monitored, measured and evaluated. This report presents the findings of the measurement deep dive, which focuses on these aspects to explore how current monitoring systems, internal processes and data can be adapted to capture WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in South Sudan.

The other report in this series, the stabilization report, presents the findings of the stabilization deep dive, which explores the potential for WFP crisis and emergency response to contribute to a reduction in direct violence, enhance basic physical security and increase stability.

Together, these two reports conclude that WFP is well placed to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in South Sudan and make 11 recommendations to this end. Dynamics at the time of research and ongoing developments are negatively affecting the food security mandate of WFP in South Sudan as well as the resources available. While humanitarian needs are increasing, WFP South Sudan has been forced to reduce its assistance in some areas due to a lack of funding and is facing increasing access constraints linked to increased insecurity and/or climate change in areas such as Jonglei and Unity states.

Peace is a prerequisite for eliminating hunger. While WFP is not a peacebuilding agency, by intentionally seeking to contribute to improving the prospects for peace, its programming can start to break the vicious circle between hunger and conflict in South Sudan, despite the unfavourable conditions.

Objectives and methodology

This case study series explores WFP South Sudan's contribution to improving the prospects for peace through two thematic deep dives: on measurement and stabilization.

The objective of this measurement deep dive is to assess WFP's potential to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in South Sudan. It explores the current monitoring systems and the internal processes that WFP South Sudan has developed to measure its contribution to improving the prospects for peace. The objective of the stabilization deep dive (part I of the series) is to explore the potential for WFP crisis and emergency response to reduce direct violence, enhance basic physical security and contribute to stability. This study forms part of a broader knowledge partnership between SIPRI and WFP, in which South Sudan is one of 12 case study countries. The research involved a remote phase of desk review of WFP programme documents and data sets, and of literature on South Sudan. It also entailed remote interviews with WFP country office staff, as well as consultations with United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in 2021. Field work took place in South Sudan on 14–25 February 2022. Qualitative data was collected from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in Juba in Central Equatoria and Bor in Jonglei state, as well as adjacent locations. The case study focused mainly on activities related to crisis and emergency response and resilience building.

The findings of these two reports reflect the situation at the time. The context in South Sudan is highly dynamic from a political, economic and social perspective, and the report should be read with this in mind.

Overview of findings

Measurement deep dive

This measurement deep dive explores WFP's current monitoring systems and the internal processes that WFP South Sudan has put in place to measure its contribution to improving the prospects for peace. WFP South Sudan has a robust monitoring system built to monitor assistance, impact, efficiency and performance. Its technical units, such as the Research, Assessment and Monitoring unit, undertake extensive data collection exercises to ensure that the delivery of assistance is guided by evidence-based programming.

WFP South Sudan is well aware of the context in which it operates and highly sensitive to unfolding dynamics. This has led the country office to ramp up its peace ambition in South Sudan, with a special focus on hard-to-reach locations and hotspots of violence, in a well-established contribution to peace strategy. For WFP South Sudan to pursue ongoing efforts, it must be able to translate this peace ambition first into programming and then into monitoring, while also learning from its challenges and successes. An increased level of peace ambition requires additional monitoring.

Monitoring, assessing and measuring WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in complex environments present a number of challenges. Previously identified challenges of attribution, intangibility, fragility and complexity of causality are also apparent in South Sudan. Technical challenges and access constraints linked to the highly volatile context in deep field locations and conflict-affected areas also restrict assessments. WFP South Sudan has put mechanisms and teams in place to circumvent these challenges. WFP's existing monitoring system requires further adaptation if it is to be able to assess its contribution to improving the prospects for peace in a systematic manner.

The metrics used by WFP to assess programme performance currently say little about how WFP interventions interact with the dynamics of peace and conflict. However, the South Sudan country office has used specific tools and methodologies to capture the lived experience of peace and conflict dynamics in the communities it serves. The country office must pursue its ongoing efforts, which have great potential to assess contributions to peace and bring about the required changes to improve the roll-out of these tools and methodologies.

Using the data already systematically collected by WFP to measure its contribution improving the prospects for peace would require the allocation of further dedicated resources and time. It would, for example, require improved information sharing within WFP South Sudan and the building of stronger staff capacity with sound awareness and understanding of peace and conflict, beyond the dedicated Conflict, Security and Access Team. This would allow WFP to apply a peacebuilding lens to monitoring, analytical processes and programming, and to adapt programming to changing dynamics.

Through discussions with the WFP country office and partners on the ground, the research has identified specific opportunities that WFP South Sudan can continue to explore and other opportunities on which it can build. Its proximity to violent conflict and extensive data collection capacities, such as its comprehensive survey structure, leave WFP South Sudan well placed to gather much-needed micro-level data on peace and conflict dynamics as they play out and affect both communities and assistance. Processes, tools and methodologies launched by the country office in line with WFP South Sudan's Contribution to Peace Strategy already capitalize on WFP South Sudan's strengths. In addition, its unique country office is already actively engaged with and consulting partners that collect data on security and the dynamics of in-country violence. Initiatives by the country office provide opportunities to manage the joint evidence base for assessing WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace.

Recommendations

1. WFP South Sudan's country office management must ensure that its ambition and strategy are communicated to all staff, with special attention to field offices. This will require continuous communication and socialization of the strategy to ensure its progress. Possible disruptive effects linked to staff rotation will need to be mitigated by ensuring that staff arriving in country gain a sound awareness and understanding of what WFP South Sudan is trying to achieve.
2. The country office and management must invest in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of contributions to peace. To that effect, the M&E strategy, approach, methodology and tools will need to be revised.
3. The country office and management must encourage increased understanding of peace and conflict dynamics and peace measurement. To achieve this, it should consider raising awareness of the strategies already in place, including in field offices, and training the M&E teams on the measurement and monitoring of contributions to peace.
4. The country office must strengthen its human resources and allocate time to make sense of the data collected. More dedicated time and staff can enable enhanced analysis of the available data, including, for example, correlation analysis.

5. WFP South Sudan management and the Conflict Security and Access Team (CSAT) must pursue efforts to roll out the tools and methodologies developed in support of conflict analysis and contextual understanding. In this way, the team will be able to identify the timing of and areas for engagement with, and situate where WFP's interventions are contributing—either directly or indirectly—to improving the prospects for peace.
6. Security incident analysis and the tracking of WFP programmatic response should be combined to track WFP's ability to adapt and respond to a changing environment. In locations where security incidents are in decline, WFP can search for evidence of positive change in social dynamics.
7. The CSAT should continue to investigate what the perceptual data says about security, peace and conflict dynamics. Expansion of the protocol designed to analyse sensitive information in Jonglei and the GPAA to other states and counties provides an opportunity to achieve this.
8. The country office must conduct and continue to expand qualitative assessments to translate local knowledge and perceptions into programmatic changes to improve the prospects for peace. For example, it must continue to collect data related to perceptions of assistance, information sharing and awareness among communities as part of Post-distribution Monitoring and of Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System plus (FSNMS+).
9. M&E teams should select and redefine the peace-related indicators to be incorporated into existing monitoring processes; and track the indicators over time to capture the impact of WFP activities, such as community-led processes on social dynamics or social cohesion, among other things. They should also consider a longer timeframe to observe longer-term changes in relational dynamics, based on the Country Strategic Plan's new 13-year horizon.
10. M&E teams should provide an overview of existing data collection tools and methodologies for all processes currently in use, in order to facilitate the reconciliation and triangulation of findings on similar indicators captured by different tools.
11. The WFP country office, and more specifically programme and technical teams, must continue to work with and through partners—UN agencies, INGOs and local peacebuilding NGOs—on implementation of the South Sudan country office Contribution to Peace Strategy, through information sharing and continuing to leverage comparative advantages to improve conflict sensitivity and identify windows of opportunity.

1. Context analysis

This context analysis provides a socio-economic and demographic overview of South Sudan and outlines the trajectory of the country since independence. More specifically, it looks at some of the causes of the civil war and the drivers of organized violence. It also discusses humanitarian outcomes and the food security situation.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Violent conflict, natural disasters and poor governmental institutional capacity have combined to make South Sudan among the least developed countries in the world. It was ranked bottom of the Human Development Index in 2021.¹ South Sudan is also among the ten countries in the world most vulnerable to the impact of climate change (see box 1.1) and among the worst affected by food crises.²

Levels of multidimensional poverty are high. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that 92 per cent of the population is multidimensionally poor.³ Levels of multidimensional poverty are higher than monetary poverty because people living above the monetary poverty line can still suffer deprivation linked, for example, to lack of access to health and education.⁴ Indicative of this type of poverty is the fact that less than 6 per cent of the rural population, which constitutes 79 per cent of the population, has access to electricity.⁵

The economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues. Crude petroleum exports contribute 90 per cent of revenue and constitute almost all exports.⁶ The sharp declines in international oil prices in 2020 and 2021 adversely affected economic growth and development while exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.⁷

Agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries constitute the primary source of livelihood for 95 per cent of the population, with some geographical variations.⁸ However, only 4 per cent of arable land is cultivated in any one year, mostly by smallholder subsistence farmers.⁹

The South Sudanese population is young and ethnically diverse: 72 per cent of the 11.6 million population are under 30 years of age and 41 per cent are below the age of 15.¹⁰ An estimated 64 different ethnic groups are present in the country, although precise definition of ethnic belonging can be challenging.¹¹ The Dinka constitute the largest ethnic group in South Sudan and exert political influence, including through President Salva Kiir, of the Dinka ethnic group. The second ethnic group is the Nuer,

¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report, 2021–2022, *Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World* (UNDP: New York, 2022).

² Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network (FSIN), *Global Report on Food Crisis: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions* (FSIN: Rome and Washington, DC, 2022).

³ United Nations Development Programme (note 1).

⁴ United Nations Development Programme (note 1).

⁵ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), South Sudan: Humanitarian Needs Overview, humanitarian programme cycle 2023 (UNOCHA: New York, 25 Nov. 2022).

⁶ Mawejje, J., *Directions for Reform: A Country Economic Memorandum for Recovery and Resilience in South Sudan* (World Bank: Washington, DC, June 2022).

⁷ OCHA (note 5); and International Crisis Group, 'Oil or nothing: Dealing with South Sudan's bleeding finances', Africa report no. 305, 6 Oct. 2022.

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *South Sudan Emergency Livelihood Response Programme 2021–2023* (FAO: Juba, 2021).

⁹ African Development Bank Group, 'Development of Agriculture in South Sudan', *South Sudan Infrastructure Action Plan*, Tunis, 2013.

¹⁰ OCHA (note 5); and United Nations Population Fund, 'World Population Dashboard: South Sudan'.

¹¹ Kon, M., 'Institutional development, governance, and ethnic politics in South Sudan', *Journal of Global Economics*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2015).

Box 1.1. Climate change

At a time when the effects of climate change are becoming more visible around the globe, South Sudan is heating up twice as fast as the global average, by 0.4 degrees over the past three decades. The country is vulnerable to the short-term and long-term effects of climate change, which manifest as more frequent and intense flooding and droughts across the country.^a Jonglei and Unity states have experienced consecutive years of flooding as additional climate-induced hazards. There is also strong dependence on charcoal, firewood and grass for cooking, which leads to environmental degradation through rapid deforestation in some areas.

Extreme weather events and widespread insecurity negatively affect climate-sensitive rural livelihoods, pushing people to revert to negative coping mechanisms, which include leaving their homes and selling assets. For example, communities living on submerged lands in Unity state are forced to live on stranded islands. In addition, when people from the country's main farming areas in the Greater Equatoria region are displaced, this compromises food availability across the country.^b

The convergence of climate change and insecurity is having serious implications for the socio-economic future of South Sudan, as the population is caught in a vicious circle.^c Combined with severe underdevelopment and insecurity, climate-related events can act as a threat multiplier through various pathways, some of which are already in play in South Sudan. While seasonal migration is a traditional form of adaptation, climate-induced events in conflict-prone South Sudan also cause severe disruption to seasonal patterns of mobility.^d These are likely to lead to tensions in some areas of the country where control over natural resources, such as access to land and water, is already a bone of contention. In Jonglei state, where agro-pastoralism constitutes the main livelihood, the impact of climate change is pushing pastoralists further away in search of grazing land and water during the dry season. As a result, they are compelled to make more frequent incursions into the Greater Equatoria region and clashes between farmers and pastoralists are becoming more common.

^a NUPI, 'Climate, peace and security fact sheet: South Sudan', 11 Mar. 2021.

^b Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *South Sudan Emergency Livelihood Response Programme 2021–2023* (FAO: Juba, 2021).

^c Ensor, M. O., 'Youth, climate change, and peace in South Sudan', *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, vol. 25, no. 4 (Oct. 2013), pp. 526–33.

^d NUPI (note a).

who also enjoy political influence through the vice-presidency of Riek Machar.¹² South Sudan's ethnic make-up comprises other groups, such as the Murle, who live in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), adjacent to Jonglei state. These three ethnic groups are central to the demographic make-up of Jonglei state.

Civil war in the world's newest state

Violence broke out in the capital, Juba, just two years after South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011. The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed in September 2018 between the government under President Kiir, the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in Opposition (SPLA-IO) and ten other armed and political groups.¹³

During the second Sudanese civil war (1983–2005), the armed faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the SPLA, forcefully suppressed internal dissent.¹⁴ However, multiple local grievances created numerous motives for armed confrontation and shifting alliances within the wider conflict. By 1991, a civil war

¹² Mayik, B. M., 'The impact of child abduction and cattle raiding among the Dinka, Nuer and Murle: A case study of Jonglei state, South Sudan', Jan. 2021.

¹³ ACCORD, 'Reviving peace in South Sudan through the Revitalised Peace Agreement', 11 Feb. 2019.

¹⁴ Johnson, D. H., 'The SPLA split: Surviving factionalism', ed. D. H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Old Wars and New Wars*, Expanded 3rd edn (Boydell & Brewer, 2016).

that had predominantly been fought between the Sudanese central government and the southern rebel movement had been transformed into a network of internal wars.¹⁵ Rebel leader Riek Machar of the Nuer ethnic group created a splinter rebel movement, which plunged the SPLM into years of bitter infighting that played out largely along ethnic lines.¹⁶

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the SPLM/A and the government of Sudan ended the second Sudanese civil war in 2005 and laid the ground for South Sudan's independence. The CPA provided for an interim period during which the southern Sudanese government was granted regional autonomy and a share of national wealth and power. Southern Sudan experienced dramatic growth during this period.¹⁷ Rather than embarking on a process of reconciliation, however, the SPLM, led by Salva Kiir, used part of this wealth to buy peace from opposing armed groups in the south. These groups were offered amnesty and incorporated into the SPLA, which quickly grew in size and then fractured into separate command and control structures.¹⁸ When civil war broke out in 2013, the army was in effect a collection of ethnically based militia, each of which was organized on the basis of personal loyalty to its commander.¹⁹

A crackdown on the opposition ultimately led to fighting between government and opposition forces in Juba in December 2013, which spread to other locations.²⁰ In one week alone, it is estimated that ethnic targeting in the capital caused around 5000 deaths.²¹ These deliberate attacks quickly spread to the three states of the Greater Upper Nile region: Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile, as well as the GPAA.²² Jonglei state became the frontline of the armed struggle between the government and the opposition, centred around Bor town, the state capital.²³

A peace initiative led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) failed in 2015 and the fighting expanded geographically in 2016, including to the Greater Equatoria region, the breadbasket of South Sudan.²⁴

As noted above, the two main warring parties, the SPLM and the SPLM-IO, signed the R-ARCSS in 2018, alongside ten other armed and political groups. However, rebel leader General Thomas Cirillo in Equatoria refused to sign the agreement, partly out of frustration over Juba's hoarding of the country's oil wealth.²⁵ After delays and renewed negotiations to save the R-ARCSS, Kiir and Machar formed a unity government and declared an end to the civil war in 2020. Nonetheless, slow implementation of key provisions of the R-ARCSS, notably unification of the armed forces absorbing fighters loyal to Kiir and Machar, threatens the peace process. Meanwhile, security continues

¹⁵ Johnson (note 14).

¹⁶ International Crisis Group, 'South Sudan: From independence to civil war', 9 July 2021.

¹⁷ Deng, D., *Compound Fractures: Political Formations, Armed Groups and Regional Mediation in South Sudan*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, East Africa Report no 21, Dec. 2018, pp. 1–24.

¹⁸ Deng (note 17), pp.1–24.

¹⁹ Noel, K., 'Understanding the roots of conflict in South Sudan', Council on Foreign Relations, 14 Sep. 2016.

²⁰ De Waal, A., 'Introduction: Making sense of South Sudan', *African Affairs*, vol. 122, no. 486 (Jan. 2023); and Vertin, Z., *A Rope from the Sky: The Making and Unmaking of the World's Newest State* (Pegasus Books, 2018).

²¹ Human Rights Watch, 'South Sudan: Ethnic targeting, widespread killings', 16 Jan. 2014.

²² Justin, P. H. and De Vries, L., 'Governing unclear lines: Local boundaries as a (re)source of conflict in South Sudan', *Journal of Borderland Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2019), pp. 31–46.

²³ Dawkins, S., 'The problem of the missing dead', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 58, no. 5 (2021), pp. 1098–1116; and International Crisis Group (ICG), 'South Sudan: Jonglei, "We have always been at war"', Africa report no. 221, 22 Dec. 2014.

²⁴ Martell, P., *First Raise a Flag: How South Sudan Won the Longest War but Lost the Peace* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2019); and Boswell, A., *Conflict and Crisis in South Sudan's Equatoria*, USIP Special Report no. 493, 14 Apr. 2021.

²⁵ International Crisis Group (note 16); and International Crisis Group (note 7).

to deteriorate across the country, in particular in the Greater Upper Nile region, and thus Jonglei and Unity states.

Throughout the conflict, civilians have borne the brunt of the violence. It is estimated that civil war led to around 400 000 deaths between 2013 and 2018, with half the casualties directly attributable to conflict-related violence.²⁶ Conflict and violence since 2011 have generated massive displacement estimated at nearly 5 million internal displacements.²⁷ In addition, the UN Human Rights Council (OHCHR) notes that a characteristic of the civil war has been the increasing securitization of the state, and that the intelligence arms of the security sector play a pivotal role in the repression of civilians, who have been deprived of their fundamental freedoms.²⁸ The OHCHR found intentional starvation, arbitrary arrest and torture, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and child recruitment to be chief among the major human rights violations, as well as destruction of property and livelihoods by the SPLA and SPLA-IO forces alike.²⁹ The deliberate use of forced starvation as a tactic, condemned in UN Security Council Resolution 2417, was also reported in addition to control over the delivery of aid supplies and aid diversion.³⁰ The majority of these actions have gone unpunished and recent investigations demonstrate that SGBV remains endemic across the country.³¹

Violence at the subnational and local levels after the civil war: Focus on Jonglei and Unity states

After the end of the civil war, the frequency and intensity of organized violence increased outside Juba, as political and military elites affiliated with the government and opposition extended their rivalries. Organized violence in South Sudan is manifest at the national, subnational and local levels with varying degrees of severity and intensity.³² Violence at the subnational and local levels is intrinsically linked to—and cannot be understood outside of—broader national political dynamics. A good case in point is the ongoing violence in Jonglei and Unity states, which threatens the prospects for peace. Levels of violence since 2018 are intrinsically related to the legacy of decades of conflict, from the civil wars with Sudan to the civil war after 2013, and to the political economy and social relations.

The current violence is also driven by the devastating socio-economic impact of decades of conflict, as well as economic decline aggravated by the ripple effects of the measures taken to counter the Covid-19 pandemic and of the war in Ukraine. These shocks have helped to undermine economic growth in South Sudan, leading to inflation and currency depreciation. In addition, climate change has worsened the economic situation and exacerbated tensions around control over resources in Jonglei and Unity states.

²⁶ Checchi, F. et al., *Estimates of Crisis-attributable Mortality in South Sudan, December 2013–April 2018: A Statistical Analysis* (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: London, 2018). See also Dawkins (note 23).

²⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Country profile: South Sudan, Updated 24 May 2023.

²⁸ UN Human Rights Council, 40th session, ‘Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan’, 25 Feb. to 22 Mar. 2019, A/HRC/40/69.

²⁹ World Vision International, *No Choice: It Takes a World to End the Use of Child Soldiers*, Feb. 2019; Amnesty International, ‘South Sudan: “if you do not cooperate, I’ll gun you down”, Conflict-related sexual violence and impunity in South Sudan’, 18 May 2022; and UN Human Rights Council, 43rd session, ‘Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, 24 Feb. to 20 Mar. 2020’, A/HRC/43/56.

³⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417, 24 May 2018; UN News, ‘Starvation used as weapon of war in South Sudan conflict, UN rights body finds’, 6 Oct. 2020; and Global Rights Compliance et al., ‘No choice but to flee: Starvation and displacement in Central Equatoria, South Sudan’, 24 Nov. 2022.

³¹ UN Human Rights Council, 49th session, ‘Conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan’, A/HRC/49/CRP.4, 21 Mar. 2022.

³² World Food Programme (WFP) and Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF), ‘Adjusting terminology for organised violence in South Sudan’, Sep. 2020.

Jonglei and Unity are among the most conflict-affected states in South Sudan. Central and southern parts of Jonglei state and the GPAA witnessed a surge in armed violence involving Dinka, Nuer and Murle community-based militias in the first half of 2020, which clearly differed from the more perennial cattle raiding in the region.³³ It is estimated that these large-scale, militarized raids and counter raids, characterized by selective targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, caused 1058 deaths, and there are also reports of abduction and rape. As a result of violent asset stripping and the use of heavy-duty military weapons, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) estimates a loss of \$30 million for the 86 000 cattle stolen in this specific timeframe.³⁴ Rather than mere tit-for-tat raids, these attacks were planned by groups with established structures and enabled by the financial and material support of traditional chiefs, officials and opposition forces.

Violence in Unity state is primarily driven by competition for influence and control, and tensions between the SPLM-in government (IG), the SPLM-IO and Nuer sub-groups. In addition to conflict intertwined with cattle-keeping, Unity is also host to oil fields, which has further fuelled violence, power struggles and fractionalization of the Nuer sub-groups in the state.³⁵ Control over the state capital, Bentiu, has shifted between the SPLA-IG and their allied Dinka and Bul Nuer militias and the SPLA-IO backed by several Nuer sub-groups from central-southern Unity state. Civilians have experienced severe abuse, including starvation, killings, sexual violence, forced disappearance and the intentional destruction of homes and assets to ensure that communities do not return.³⁶ This chronic insecurity disrupts the humanitarian response in Unity state, which has suffered from severe flooding in recent years.³⁷

Causes of the civil war and drivers of organized violence

The root causes of the civil war and drivers of current organized violence are multiple and involve a diversity of actors, including regional actors. Terms such as cattle raiding and revenge, ethnic or tribal violence, and intercommunal violence are widely used to explain the ongoing organized violence in South Sudan. In addition, labels used for armed actors often refer to entire ethnic groups or generalized masses of youth. In turn, such narratives often rely on explanations based on ideas of tradition, intractability and normality in a context of reducing severity. However, the violence is highly varied across South Sudan, and even within ethnic groups and livelihood systems. Dominant narratives and labels encourage misleading explanations for the violence and, being so widely accepted, discourage ongoing critical and fine-grained assessments of real-life conflict dynamics. In short, the common labels and terms used to describe organized subnational violence in South Sudan do more to obscure than to explain the how and why of such violence. They also serve to deflect attention, prevent an understanding of and deny accountability for ongoing organized violence.

³³ The CSRF reports that at the peak of the violence, around 10 000 armed men were mobilized in lowland Pibor alone.

³⁴ UN Mission in South Sudan and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Armed violence involving community-based militias in Greater Jonglei, January–August 2020', 15 Mar. 2021; and ACLED, 'Surface tensions: "Communal" violence and elite ambitions in South Sudan', 19 Aug. 2021.

³⁵ Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF), 'South Sudan, Conflict Sensitivity Analysis: United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Protection of Civilian (PoC) Sites Transition: Bentiu, Unity State, and Malakal, Upper Nile State', Mar. 2021.

³⁶ Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (note 35); and UN Human Rights Council, 43rd session (note 29).

³⁷ UNMISS and OHCHR, 'Report on attacks on civilians in Southern Unity state', 6 Sep. 2022.

To make sense of the ongoing violence, this research adopts a narrow focus on the linkages between the political marketplace and socio-economic deprivation, as well as on ethno-politics and the manipulation of traditional practices.

A violent political marketplace dominates political dynamics in South Sudan, with variations at the national, subnational and local levels.³⁸ In 2011, South Sudan was not a blank slate, but had inherited from Sudan a political marketplace system characterized by patronage networks and partisan loyalties. This system was initiated by the British and Anglo-Egyptian condominium for strategic purposes, creating military and political elites that often overlapped. These elites, which oversee political and military structures, still hold significant power on the basis of ethnicity and their war-time efforts.³⁹ The system is based on the premise that public office, political loyalties and political services are commodities that can be bought with state resources to secure and reward support.⁴⁰ With little or no separation between the military, judicial and administrative spheres of governance, this system sustains the political and economic power of elites while encouraging the marginalization of others at the periphery.

Independence made the political marketplace more competitive and costlier to sustain, at the expense of public services, development and economic growth. The political marketplace is sustained by material support, provided through the availability of abundant natural resources such as oil, land and water, gold and teak.⁴¹ In South Sudan, oil has been the main factor in competition and contention. The CPA granted ownership of 75 per cent of Sudan's former oil fields to the newly independent state.⁴² Significant oil reserves located in the Greater Upper Nile region along the border with Sudan have enriched the elites and generated economic dependency on the oil sector.⁴³ Oil production accounts for a significant proportion of gross domestic product (GDP), but production levels are low compared to other oil producing states and have been in decline since 2013–14.⁴⁴ The allocation of wealth and surge in petrodollars in the hands of the young country had promised economic growth and development. The export of oil turned Bentiu, the capital of Unity state, into a commercial hub and brought in new foreign investors. However, this did not translate into development gains as the country lacks robust and accountable institutions or adequate infrastructure to manage the oil sector.⁴⁵ Instead, the influx of oil revenues perpetuated patronage networks and created further inequality, at the expense of most South Sudanese who continue to live in dire conditions in large swathes of the country.⁴⁶ Conflict, from nationwide civil war to localized violence, is also a product of inequality and isolation across the country. It cannot be separated from the elite predatory behaviour that has created social conditions ripe for widespread violence. Organized violence, particularly where it overlaps with extreme food insecurity and famine conditions, remains far more prevalent in the more physically isolated agro-pastoralist and pastoralist areas than in highland agricultural areas. Furthermore, the populations with the least equitable access to resources—natural, economic, political or otherwise—often overlap with

³⁸ Boswell, A. et al., *The Security Arena in South Sudan: A Political Marketplace Study* (London School of Economics and Fletcher School, Tufts University: London, 2019).

³⁹ Vertin (note 20).

⁴⁰ Boswell et al. (note 38).

⁴¹ Boswell et al. (note 38); and De Waal, A., 'When kleptocracy becomes insolvent: Brute causes of the civil war in South Sudan', *African Affairs*, vol. 113, no. 452 (July 2014), pp. 347–69.

⁴² Ottaway, M. and Hamzawy, A., 'The Comprehensive Peace Agreement', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4 Jan. 2011.

⁴³ Chol, J. D. 'The reality of petroleum resource curse in South Sudan: Can this be avoided?', *African Review: A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2016), pp. 17–50.

⁴⁴ Vertin (note 20); and International Crisis Group (note 7).

⁴⁵ Chol (note 43).

⁴⁶ De Waal (note 41).

populations traditionally considered loyal to opposition groups, and also experience far higher levels of violence and food insecurity than those that have traditionally supported incumbent military-political elites.

The shutdown in oil production in 2012 exacerbated existing political and ethnic divisions.⁴⁷ The related cut in government revenues affected the patronage system and encouraged political dissent.

In the South Sudanese political marketplace, political and military patronage are intrinsically linked to ethnic kinship. Political and military power, and revenues circulate disproportionately among specific groups. Colonial and local military actors had already manipulated ethnic fault lines and ethnic divisions for strategic purposes for decades before independence. Research has shown the various ways in which the military-political actors in southern Sudan also instrumentalized ethnicity for recruitment during the independence struggle of the 1980s. After 2011, the South Sudanese elites further encouraged and sustained the ethnicization of politics and violence in pursuit of their own personal agenda at the periphery.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, loyalties, including electoral and military support, have become more fluid and fluctuate along and outside ethnic lines, based on the opportunities and support that can be offered.

Perhaps most importantly, research shows that growing ethnic divisions are a byproduct of conflict rather than a direct cause of the conflict itself.⁴⁹ As the two main protagonists in the civil war, Salva Kirr and Riek Machar, belong to the two largest ethnic groups in the country, the Dinka and the Nuer respectively, the origins of the civil war are often attributed to ethnic divisions. The violence of the two civil wars with Sudan left a legacy of relations and conduct of communities in South Sudan that has exacerbated pre-existing ethnic divisions, and military-political elites capitalize on these divisions. Since mobilization mostly happened along ethnic lines as a manifestation of ethnic patronage in the military, this partly explains why the conflict appears to be ethnically driven.

Elites have also co-opted traditional practices for strategic purposes, as illustrated by the rise in elite-driven cattle-related violence. Cattle-raiding used to respond to clear norms of restraint and carried with it far lower levels of violence (see box 1.2). However, armed conflict and broader political dynamics have affected livestock rearing and gradually reshaped the cattle economy, most notably with the concentration of cattle wealth in fewer powerful hands and in specific areas, where it overlaps with support for government forces, and with more households with smaller herds.⁵⁰ This has exacerbated tensions where access to land and water for livelihoods were already major bones of contention.

In addition, military and political actors mobilized community defence groups as proxy militias during previous conflicts by manipulating ethnic grievances and dismantling social structures and norms to encourage lethal violence against the elderly, women and children.⁵¹ In return, local defence groups have been provided with weapons, cattle and the ability to cover dowry payments. The latter is a critical social

⁴⁷ Vertin (note 20); De Waal (note 41); and International Crisis Group (note 7).

⁴⁸ ACLED (note 34).

⁴⁹ ACLED (note 34).

⁵⁰ Pendle, N. R., “‘The dead are just to drink from’: Recycling ideas of revenge among the western Dinka, South Sudan”, *Africa*, vol. 88, no. 1 (2018), pp. 99–121.

⁵¹ Justin and De Vries (note 22); and Pendle, N., ‘Competing authorities and norms of restraint: Governing community-embedded armed groups in South Sudan’, *International Interactions*, vol. 47, no 6 (2021).

Box 1.2. Livestock and cattle-raiding in South Sudan

In a country where agro-pastoralism is central to livelihoods in rural areas, such as in Jonglei state, socio-economic life revolves around cattle as both a source of income and a social marker. Hence, livestock ownership is as critical to livelihoods as mobility. First, financial capital is invested through cattle transactions. Agro-pastoral communities cultivate cereals but production is insufficient to fully meet needs. This means that cattle transactions are essential to provide cash.^a Second, cattle transactions within and between communities build social capital, which helps to build and maintain social cohesion. A good case in point is the payment of a dowry, or bride price, between families in cattle.

The centrality of cattle and livestock is illustrated by raids and counter raids, which are long-standing features of pastoralist and agro-pastoral societies. Imbued with spirituality, cattle raiding marks the transition of an individual from adolescence to maturity and speaks to communities through a collective sense of purpose.^b This encouraged communities some decades ago to establish local defence groups, mostly of young men, for protection in areas where the state was absent.^c

These groups observe spiritual and social norms of restraint, which limit the intensity of violence and keep revenge under control. These norms are safeguarded by traditional chiefs and spiritual leaders who oversee the raiding and provide accountability through mechanisms of traditional justice based on revenge and compensation regimes.^d Not answering calls for mobilization can expose young men to stigmatization and public humiliation within the community. Cattle raiding is a feature of masculinity in South Sudan, over which women exercise influence with songs to incite either raids or revenge attacks.^e

^a Dawkins, S., 'The problem of the missing dead', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 58, no. 5 (2021).

^b Pendle, N., 'Competing authorities and norms of restraint: Governing community-embedded armed groups in South Sudan', *International Interactions*, vol. 47, no. 6 (2021).

^c Pendle (note b); Some communities have specific structures, see Verdon, M., 'Where have all their lineages gone? Cattle and descent among the Nuer', *American Anthropological Association*, vol. 84, no. 3 (Sep. 1982); and Martell, P., *First Raise a Flag: How South Sudan Won the Longest War but Lost the Peace* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2019).

^d Pendle, N. R., "'The dead are just to drink from": Recycling ideas of revenge among the western Dinka, South Sudan', *Africa*, vol. 88, no. 1 (2018); and Pendle (note b).

^e Women can also constitute agents of peace by taking part in community dialogue, see Oxfam Case Study, 'Preventing cattle raiding violence in South Sudan: Local level peace building focusing on young people', Aug. 2016; WFP remote interviews, 2021; and WFP in-person interviews, Feb. 2022.

aspect for young men, increasingly so as average cattle prices continue to increase.⁵² These groups are still active long after the civil war.⁵³

The suppression or co-optation of these traditional structures and safeguards has sowed the seeds of intensified levels of violence within and between communities, over which traditional and spiritual leaders often have little control. This has led to a partial erosion of the authority of traditional chiefs, and of the normative safeguards around violence and compensation which could in most instances keep cycles of revenge at bay. Some of these safeguards endure in some communities, however, which suggests a more nuanced picture of cattle-raiding over which political and military leaders have not asserted full control.⁵⁴

⁵² Gebreyes, Y. A., 'The impact of conflict on the livestock sector in South Sudan', Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, South Sudan, Feb. 2016.

⁵³ Wild, H., Madut, J. and Patel, R., 'The militarization of cattle raiding in South Sudan: How a traditional practice became a tool for political violence', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2018); and UNMISS and OHCHR, *Armed Violence Involving Community-based Militias in Greater Jonglei*, Jan.–Aug. 2020, Mar. 2021.

⁵⁴ Pendle (note 50).

Humanitarian outcomes

Humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate in South Sudan due to a combination of drivers such as violence in large swathes of the country, climate change and economic decline, as well as the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic which has added to structural vulnerabilities. Nearly 9 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2022.⁵⁵ The figure for 2023 is estimated at 9.4 million—a staggering 76 per cent of South Sudan’s population.⁵⁶ On top of conflict-induced displacement, disasters such as floods led to almost 2 million displacements.⁵⁷ Half of these were caused by the severe flooding in 2020 and 2021.

Mounting needs are exhausting livelihood-based coping strategies and severely weakening community resilience. With growing humanitarian needs and displacement come rising protection concerns. Host communities, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees have little access to health services, safe water and education, as well as electricity and other infrastructure. However, since displacement puts additional pressure on available resources and host community assets, it has the potential to lead to tensions in some cases. SGBV also contributes to increased protection concerns for women and girls who are exposed to physical and sexual assault at water points, latrines and while collecting firewood.⁵⁸

Humanitarian access and operations are constrained by armed conflict, insecurity and environmental conditions that hamper the delivery of assistance to affected populations. Aid workers, humanitarian facilities and warehouses are deliberately targeted by armed actors. This led to the deaths of five aid workers and the looting of humanitarian supplies in 2021, and the killing of aid workers in Unity state in February 2022.

Food insecurity

The above-mentioned drivers create a perfect storm of increased food insecurity across the country in multiple pathways.⁵⁹ Armed actors have deliberately targeted people’s assets, destroying and looting property, which has severely affected livelihood systems, including agro-pastoralism and pastoralism. Fighting and the fear of violence in rural areas, both during the civil war and in recent episodes of organized violence, have prevented farmers from accessing their land to plant or harvest crops, leading to cereal deficits. After fighting spread across the country in 2016, preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance, food security deteriorated drastically and humanitarian actors declared famine in Leer and Mayendit counties of Unity State in February 2017.⁶⁰ Food insecurity also spread to cattle camps, which were previously considered places of relative food security in terms of animal protein.

⁵⁵ While food aid is critical to specific groups and locations such as IDP camps, food aid only represents a small proportion of total consumption. Aid dependency has grown in market-dependent states such as Jonglei and Unity, as trade routes and markets are disrupted. Outside of these zones, household consumption of food aid is fairly limited. This, however, is changing, as food aid contributes an increasing proportion of household supply. See Thomas, E., *Moving Towards Markets: Cash, Commodification and Conflict in South Sudan*, [n.d.].

⁵⁶ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), *South Sudan: Humanitarian Needs Overview*, humanitarian programme cycle 2023 (UNOCHA: New York, 25 Nov. 2022); and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (note 27).

⁵⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (note 27).

⁵⁸ OCHA (note 56); and Interviews, South Sudan, Feb. 2022.

⁵⁹ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), ‘South Sudan: Acute Malnutrition Situation for February–March 2022 and Projections for April–July 2022’.

⁶⁰ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), ‘South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for January 2017 and Projections for February–April 2017 and May–July 2017’.

Food insecurity at unprecedented levels in 2022 is among the main drivers of humanitarian need.⁶¹ At the time of the in-country research in February and March 2022, 6.83 million people—around 55 per cent of the population—were experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). At that time, Jonglei (along with Pibor county in the GPAA) and Unity states were the most food insecure. More than half the population of those states faced acute food insecurity. The October 2022 IPC estimated that 7.76 million people would face severe acute food insecurity at Crisis level (IPC Phase 3) or above during the April to July 2023 lean season, marking the highest level yet observed and surpassing the levels seen during the conflicts in 2013 and 2016. Of this 7.76 million, 2.9 million people will face Emergency (IPC 4) acute food insecurity and 43 000 people will be in Catastrophic (IPC 5) acute food insecurity in parts of Jonglei and Unity states.⁶²

Food insecurity has a devastating impact on the population of South Sudan and drives gender-related protection risks. Reports suggest that women and girls are likely to experience greater food insecurity, especially in female-headed households, but partly also because of their social roles as caregivers. Distinctive negative coping mechanisms illustrate the gendered impact of food insecurity. Women and girls are also exposed to early marriage and early pregnancy, which means an end to their formal education. At the same time, reports demonstrate that men and boys perceived that they were deprioritized over women and girls for shelter needs in Protection of Civilians sites during the civil war. Unmet shelter needs are correlated with an increased risk of exposure to gender-based violence, more specifically for boys and girls aged under 13.⁶³ Nonetheless, it is critical to acknowledge women and girls' agency and key role as agents of change in South Sudan's present and future.

⁶¹ OCHA (note 56).

⁶² Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 'South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation October to November 2022 and Projections for December 2022 to March 2023 and April to July 2023'.

⁶³ Oxfam, consolidated gender analysis, 'South Sudan Gender Analysis March–July 2016', 2017.

2. The South Sudan case study approach

Objectives and background

This report assesses WFP's potential to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in South Sudan through a deep dive on measurement. The other deep dive, which explores stabilization in South Sudan, is presented in the first report in this series. This measurement deep dive explores the current monitoring systems and the internal processes that WFP South Sudan has developed to measure its contribution to improving the prospects for peace. WFP monitoring systems are extremely effective at monitoring the technical aspects of food security, delivery and performance. Peace, however, is not a technical aspect. This research on WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace as part of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)–WFP Knowledge Partnership is based on the understanding that violent conflict and peace are not two opposites, but complex phenomena that occur in complex social systems. The results of contributions to improving the prospects for peace are therefore not always immediate, obvious or predictable, and occur in a system that is highly dynamic, non-linear and emergent.⁶⁴

Multiple factors, drivers and channels combine to shape the prospects for peace. Untangling this intricate web of dynamics to draw conclusions about any one driver presents various analytical challenges. In such settings, it is often impossible to identify simple and objective indicators that will illustrate when a peace outcome has been achieved. Work to achieve more inclusive political, economic and social systems will not necessarily show signs of steady progress or achieve the predicted peacebuilding outcome.⁶⁵ Peacebuilding is fundamentally a series of experiments and a process of learning. In many ways, measuring the success of contributions to improving the prospects for peace is about identifying failures and ways in which systems can be adapted to reflect that learning.⁶⁶

Methodology

The research involved a remote phase of desk review of WFP programme documents and data sets, as well as literature on South Sudan. It also entailed remote interviews with WFP country office staff, as well as consultations with United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Field work took place in South Sudan on 14–25 February 2022. Qualitative data was collected from in-country in-depth interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, drawn from UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), INGOs and government agencies. Qualitative data was also obtained from focus group discussions with beneficiaries in Juba in Central Equatoria state and Bor in Jonglei state, as well as adjacent locations. The case study focused mainly on activities related to crisis and emergency response and resilience-building.

Limitations

The complexities of the multidimensional crisis in South Sudan coupled with the scope of the research resulted in two main limitations. First, the context is extremely

⁶⁴ De Coning, C., 'Adaptive peacebuilding', *International Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 2 (2018), pp. 301–17.

⁶⁵ De Coning, C., 'Complexity thinking and adaptive peacebuilding', *Accord*, no. 28 (Mar. 2019).

⁶⁶ Campbell, S. P., *Global Governance and Local Peace: Accountability and Performance in International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2018).

dynamic, which means that the analysis is valid only for the time of the field research in February 2022. Second, the research team worked through translators, which can result in a loss of nuance and meaning in translation or even biases. This report might not therefore capture all the relevant information on key WFP contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

WFP in South Sudan

WFP had been operating in South Sudan prior to independence and established a fully fledged country office there after 2011. At the time of this research, WFP's life-saving food and nutrition assistance reached 4.6 million people between January and August 2022.⁶⁷ This took the form of unconditional resources transfers as general food distribution (GFD) and 1.4 million cash-based transfers (CBT) of either cash or vouchers. WFP also reaches people through nutrition, school-based, asset creation and livelihoods programmes, as well as smallholder agricultural market support.

The Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programme is a critical resilience component of WFP intervention in South Sudan in connection with achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 and SDG 16. This initiative provides food assistance or CBTs to beneficiaries while promoting long-term resilience through asset creation, asset rehabilitation and the rebuilding of livelihoods.⁶⁸ The range of activities also aims to empower communities and reduce the risks and impacts of climate-related shocks, increase food productivity, and strengthen climate resilience and resilience to other shocks. The country office expanded FFA to hotspots of conflict and violence in 2021, including in locations in Greater Jonglei and Unity states. Components of pastoral FFA were used to support agro-pastoral and pastoral communities, including in cattle camps, in an effort to align with the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus and to address the root causes of violence.⁶⁹

WFP is well placed to overcome the practical challenges and access constraints caused by both armed conflict and seasonal factors, which each year leave 60 per cent of the country inaccessible by road during the rainy season. First, WFP South Sudan has a strong capacity to deliver at its disposal, which allows the organization to deliver food in challenging environments and overcome access constraints such as floods. To circumvent these challenges, it can deploy core rapid response teams using the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), and had prepositioned 190 tonnes of food, or 89 per cent of its target, in isolated locations ahead of the rainy season in 2021. WFP also plays a critical role as it manages the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS).⁷⁰ Second, in partnership with UNMISS and other partner agencies, WFP South Sudan has launched projects to construct and rehabilitate trunk and feeder roads. The country office is committed to pursuing efforts to fight food insecurity, restore the livelihoods of rural populations, and eliminate isolation and inequity by improving farm-to-market access and rural connectivity to basic services.⁷¹ Ultimately, the rehabilitation of roads also helps to facilitate the delivery of assistance to those in need.⁷² As part of these efforts, WFP South Sudan undertook the rehabilitation and the construction of 644 km of roads and dykes previously identified as priorities by the agency and the

⁶⁷ WFP South Sudan, Situation report no. 305, Sep. 2022.

⁶⁸ World Food Programme (WFP) South Sudan, *Annual Country Report 2021, 2022*.

⁶⁹ WFP South Sudan (note 67).

⁷⁰ WFP South Sudan (note 67).

⁷¹ WFP South Sudan, Roads Project, 'Roads to Zero Hunger', Engineering factsheet, Press release, 19 Feb. 2020.

⁷² Mahadi, M., 'The road that changes lives', World Food Programme, 6 Sep. 2019.

authorities in 2021.⁷³ These projects are part of the FFA programme and Smallholder Agriculture Market Support (SAMS) and contain elements of community participation and community sensitization.

Because of funding constraints, WFP could only provide 70 per cent of the ration entitlement to people in all the counties facing catastrophic (IPC Phase 5) and 50 per cent of the entitlement in counties with people facing emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity, including to refugees, IDPs and in rapid response delivery locations in 2022.⁷⁴ Suspension of aid included suspension of school feeding activities for 178 000 children.⁷⁵ Following new donor contributions in August 2022, WFP began to reinstate food assistance to 1.1 million of the 1.7 million targeted people who had not received assistance since April owing to the funding shortfalls. This means, however, that 600 000 people who required assistance still did not receive it.⁷⁶

⁷³ WFP South Sudan (note 67).

⁷⁴ WFP South Sudan, Country Brief, Nov. 2022.

⁷⁵ WFP Staff, 'South Sudan: Food assistance suspended as funding dries up and nation faces hungriest year since independence', 14 June 2022.

⁷⁶ WFP South Sudan (note 67).

3. The measurement deep dive

The measurement deep dive aims to explore the internal processes that WFP has put in place to measure its contribution to improving the prospects for peace through a wide-ranging analysis of WFP's collection, transmission, analysis and use of performance data. The research also probes the readiness of WFP to manage the evidence and its institutional adaptation needs, which means exploring the targets set by the country office and how these relate to current systems. The research suggests tools and instruments that WFP could use to measure contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

I. WFP's posture and ambition in South Sudan

The SIPRI research shows that WFP South Sudan contributes to improving the prospects for peace and is intentionally contributing to peace through its programming. For WFP South Sudan to pursue its efforts further, it must be able to translate this peace ambition first into programming and then into monitoring, while also learning from its successes and mistakes.

It is well established that conflict is the primary driver of food insecurity worldwide. Conflict is a recurrent shock that leads to severe food insecurity and erodes resilience capacities.⁷⁷ WFP is a dual-mandated agency that operates to relieve both humanitarian and development needs but does not have a peace-related mandate. As the world's largest humanitarian actor, however, WFP operates mostly in conflict-affected and post-conflict settings. This proximity to peace and conflict dynamics gives WFP a comparative advantage and a role to play in addressing hunger and the drivers of food insecurity. Although WFP does not have a set corporate strategy for peace, it has developed a corporate peacebuilding policy for transition settings that acknowledges the link between conflict and hunger, and the relevance of WFP's role. In addition, the agency is a signatory of the 2016 Peace Promise, which inscribes WFP's commitment to operationalize the HDP nexus by addressing the drivers of conflict and vulnerability in complex humanitarian situations.⁷⁸ Set against increasing evidence and recognition of the intersection of conflict and food insecurity, the award of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize underlined the relevance of actors such as the WFP.

The lack of standards and policies on contributions to peace at the corporate level does not prevent country offices from drafting and adopting context-relevant strategies that set peace-related ambitions and boundaries of engagement, which is exactly what WFP South Sudan is trying to achieve.

Contributing to peace in South Sudan

Before tailoring existing systems or setting up a new system to measure contributions to peace, the first step is to define what contributing to peace in South Sudan means for WFP. Peace presents conceptual and definitional challenges. Peace can be seen as a spectrum that extends from a so-called 'negative peace'—the absence of violence—to 'positive peace', the conditions that make peace sustainable in the long term. Positive peace does not mean that a society has rid itself of conflict, but that conflict has been mitigated before it becomes violent. While negative peace can be a precondition for

⁷⁷ WFP South Sudan, Contribution to Peace Strategy, Aug. 2020, unpublished.

⁷⁸ World Food Programme (WFP), *WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings* (WFP: Rome, 2013); and UN Peacebuilding Support Office, 'The Peace Promise: Commitments to more effective synergies among peace, humanitarian and development actions in complex humanitarian situations' [n.d.].

peace, negative peace challenges the prospects for positive peace through inequitable systems and institutions that perpetuate vulnerability and the marginalization of some groups. Structural violence, for example, is negative peace.⁷⁹

Aware of the geographic proximity of its interventions to peace and conflict dynamics, WFP South Sudan demonstrates that WFP is not just delivering assistance (see the Stabilization report). The impacts and consequences of food assistance have ramifications beyond the distribution points, meaning that choice of modality and targeting, among other decisions, can have an effect beyond the delivery of assistance on social relations and socio-economic parameters. This also makes it likely that WFP will have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on peace and conflict dynamics. The country office has taken a unique and proactive approach to contributing to peace.

WFP South Sudan launched its Contribution to Peace strategy (C2P) in August 2020.⁸⁰ In South Sudan, the humanitarian crisis is borne out of isolation and inequality, which drive organized violence. In turn, the different levels of organized violence prevalent across the country drive humanitarian needs, including unprecedented levels of food insecurity. The country office therefore acknowledges the need to emphasize the relevance of addressing the root causes of violence and supporting peace in WFP's food security mandate. This document suggests that there is room for WFP to promote peace-related values and principles in the contexts where it operates, through the delivery of food assistance and support for food security and nutrition, which remain its core and mandated priorities.

For WFP, there is no standard to follow for contributing to peace. A contribution to peace might start with life-saving interventions and direct contributions to famine response and move on to changing lives through resilience building programmes. This means that WFP South Sudan can contribute to peace by contributing to immediate needs while working towards positive peace. While acknowledging the need for peacebuilding activities such as community dialogue, the strategy is based on a realistic approach that highlights community need more than social dialogue, such as activities entrenched in livelihood support interventions.⁸¹ To achieve this, it sets an overall objective to contribute to positive peace by first focusing on negative peace. By reducing the intensity and frequency of violence as well as reducing opportunities for violence, the strategy aims to foster sustainable change.

The C2P provides a framework for leveraging WFP's toolbox in different geographic areas of contributing to peace. Drawing on a sound contextual understanding, WFP South Sudan defined a Theory of Change (TOC) anchored in intentionality: '**If** WFP pursues contributions to peace across all programming, including by prioritizing and programming differently within hotspots of organized violence and hunger, **then** WFP will have the greatest potential to contribute to peace in South Sudan because it will directly target the most impactful manifestations of inequity and isolation first'. The TOC is complemented by three conditions: long-term planning, scale and complementarity.

⁷⁹ Galtung, J., 'Violence, peace, and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1969), pp. 167–91. For an in-depth discussion on the critical elements for WFP to consider in defining peace, see Delgado et al., *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2019).

⁸⁰ WFP South Sudan (note 77).

⁸¹ The strategy acknowledges the relevance of community dialogue when embedded in food assistance and livelihoods interventions; and that isolating one component is neither sufficient nor useful for communities that 'cannot eat dialogue'.

Box 3.1. The Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund

The Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) was launched by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the UN country team in 2018. The trust fund seeks to initiate and encourage new ways of looking at the issues threatening development and the peace process in South Sudan. Through interagency pooled funding, it aims to bring together actors across the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus to address the interlinked drivers of conflict and vulnerability at the community level. The Jonglei/ Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) area-based programme, launched in January 2021, is one initiative funded by the multi-partner fund. The RSRTF is organized around three pillars: reconciliation, stabilization and resilience.

Source: UN Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund, Annual Report, 2021, 2022.

Translating peace ambition into peacebuilding programming

As part of ongoing efforts to translate its ambition into practice, WFP South Sudan has launched contributions to peacebuilding programmes. WFP South Sudan leads a consortium of actors in an area-based programme on Community Violence Reduction (CVR) in Jonglei and the GPAA. Three other area-based projects on community security, access to quality learning and ending cycles of violence, which focus on the return of abductees, stabilization and education, complement the area-based programming in Jonglei and the GPAA, funded by the South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) (see box 3.1).

WFP South Sudan also leads an Area Reference Group (ARG) established as a coordination framework. Its members meet in working groups to carry out joint context analysis, information sharing and joint implementation. This multi-partner project links humanitarian support to stabilization, reconciliation and resilience activities with the aim of breaking cycles of vulnerability and violence to achieve community violence reduction. To this end, its members supported the Pieri Peace Process at the peace conference in Pieri in March 2021, and in subsequent dialogues and conferences to strengthen inter- and intra-community collaboration and women's leadership. In addition to successful coordination and community-level engagement, these projects were able to point to a number of achievements in October 2022. First, there was no successful violent mass-mobilization of youth until late December 2022, and there had been a decrease in civilian casualties, a reduction in the number of reported cases of abduction and the return of abductees as part of the Pieri Peace Agreement, as well as improved community security, vaccination of livestock and the repair of community access roads.⁸²

Resilience programming, which seeks to increase the potential of communities exposed to hazards to resist, adapt and recover, is at the core of WFP South Sudan's C2P strategy.⁸³ The country office is committed to expanding and integrating the Safety Net and Resilience (SNR) portfolio—school feeding, FFA, urban safety nets (USN) and Smallholder Agricultural Market Support (SAMS)—into hard-to-reach areas, including hotspots of violence. These isolated hotspots of violence often coincide with hotspots of hunger. By expanding its resilience programming into such hotspots, WFP South Sudan is increasing its risk appetite (see box 3.2).

WFP has also launched a Pastoral FFA strategy to address specific challenges and leverage opportunities in these communities (see the context analysis) with the aim

⁸² Comerford, M., 'Towards dealing with the past in Greater Jonglei: Learning from the Pieri Action Plan for Peace', *Peace Canal Learning Paper*, July 2022; UN Multi Partner Trust Fund, RSRTF 'Jonglei and GPAA Area-Based Programme', 2022; and University of Edinburgh, Peace Agreements Database, Lou Nuer-Dinka Bor-Murle Action for Peace, Jonglei State, 25 Mar. 2021, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/view/2378>>.

⁸³ WFP, 'Resilience building'.

Box 3.2. Corporate risk management and risk appetite

The World Food Programme (WFP) operates in challenging and difficult environments where it is inevitably exposed to a plethora of risks. A risk is defined as the possibility that an event or a given impact will occur, adversely affecting the achievement of objectives. WFP cannot avoid taking risks but seeks to minimize and contain these while following humanitarian principles to ensure the safety and security of its staff and local communities. WFP has updated its risk policy, the Enterprise Risk Management policy, to develop a common understanding of risk management at WFP where risks are classified in four categories: strategic, operational, fiduciary and financial, to which can be added reputational risks.

In relation to the above, WFP has ensured that risk appetite statements are aligned with the strategic plan and reflect the direction of the organization in responding to risks. A risk appetite is defined as the types and amount of risk, on a broad level, that an organization is willing to accept in pursuit of a value. The risk appetite was revised in 2016 to reflect the evolution of WFP's understanding of changing environments and lessons learned. This serves as a corporate basis for engagement that WFP country offices adapt to context-specific appetites and tolerance levels. For example, WFP corporate can adopt a 'risk hungry' profile around strategic risk taking as it operates in challenging environments, but still be categorized as risk averse for operational and financial risks and highly risk averse for fiduciary risks.

These risk statements serve as guidance for analysis, response to and monitoring of risks; inform daily decisions and the prioritization of resources; support the establishment of performance targets for managers' areas of responsibilities; and enable managers to carry out WFP's mandate within set boundaries for risk management and respect for core values and humanitarian principles. Risk assessments must therefore be informed by regular consultation and monitoring using specific measures such as risk metrics and indicators.

Source: Adapted from WFP, '2018 Enterprise Risk Management Policy', WFP Executive Board, Risk appetite statement, Rome, 2018.

of also providing a platform for peacebuilding, livelihood diversification and climate change adaptation.⁸⁴ As an entry point, the project aims to address short-term hunger through conditional food assistance, while building self-reliance and resilience to shocks through asset creation for more than 40 000 pastoral and agro-pastoral households inside and outside the cattle camps.

Where environmental constraints and insecurity restrict access to the population, WFP deploys the RRM using mobile teams to provide emergency services and work to re-establish humanitarian access to remote areas. WFP South Sudan is planning to expand this mechanism through its C2P strategy.

Peace ambitions and monitoring requirements

Overall, WFP is a highly peace-proximate actor, which means it operates in conflict-affected and fragile environments. WFP must therefore constantly monitor its programmes to be able to capture signals that might indicate that an intervention is no longer having the desired effect or is starting to generate negative side-effects. WFP does this by upholding the principle of 'do no harm' and ensuring that its programming is conflict sensitive. Conflict sensitivity requires a thorough and continuous contextual understanding and the ability to maximize the positive impacts of interventions and minimize their negative impacts. Peace awareness can increase as WFP monitors these dynamics and adapts programming to avoid contributing to the drivers of vio-

⁸⁴ It is important to note that the objective of the project is to enhance the food and nutrition security and livelihood resilience of pastoral communities by making pastoral activities more sustainable, rather than reverting to alternative livelihood strategies.

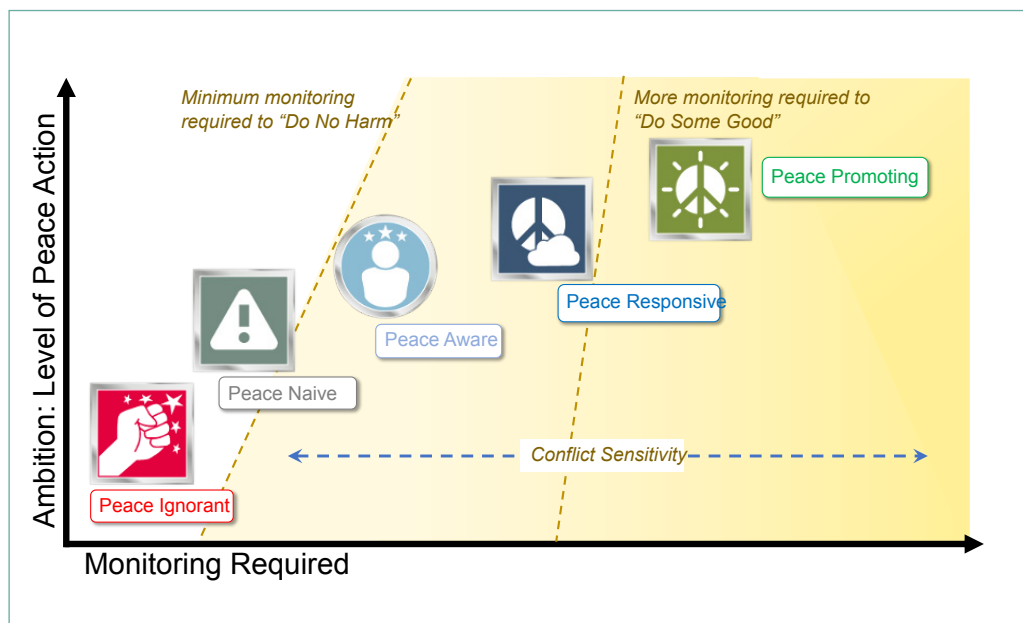


Figure 3.1. More monitoring is required for higher levels of ambition

Source: International Organization for Peacebuilding (Interpeace), ‘Peace responsiveness’, Sep. 2021; version adapted for a WFP Executive Board document, 26 Apr. 2021.

lence.⁸⁵ Peace and conflict are complex phenomena, which means that the impacts of contributions to improving the prospects for peace by intervening actors are not always immediate and are often unpredictable. Moving from being peace aware to being peace responsive and peace promoting, that is, making an intentional and sustained contribution to improving the prospects for peace, will require more work on both monitoring and identifying progress, as well as identifying opportunities for engagement.⁸⁶

WFP South Sudan has established its ambition across the peacebuilding spectrum between peace responsive and peace promoting levels of peace action (see figure 3.1). Humanitarian and development actors must avoid being peace ignorant or peace naive, which means they must avoid intentionally or unintentionally providing incentives for violence. At a minimum, WFP South Sudan needs to be peace aware to ensure conflict sensitivity and do no harm. This requires a minimum level of monitoring. Additional monitoring is needed when and where WFP identifies windows of opportunity to contribute to improving the prospects for peace by being peace responsive (seeing needs and addressing them) or peace promoting (proactively creating opportunities for peace). In summary, heightened peace-related ambitions such as the ones expressed in the C2P strategy and translated into action through peacebuilding programmes (see above) require additional monitoring to identify opportunities for engagement, and to monitor and identify progress.⁸⁷

Amid ongoing efforts to address the root causes of violence and food insecurity, and to extend resilience programming to hard-to-reach areas, including hotspots of violence, WFP South Sudan is moving along the ambition axis from peace aware towards peace promoting.

The change sought by the C2P strategy now needs to be reflected in the monitoring systems put in place to transform what information is collected and how information is used to assess programme performance and WFP’s contributions to peace. Unless shaped to collect and analyse data through a peace lens, the monitoring systems will

⁸⁵ Brusset, E. et al., *Measuring Peace Impact: Challenges and Solutions* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2022).

⁸⁶ Brusset et al. (note 85); see also Interpeace, ‘Peace responsiveness’, [n.d.].

⁸⁷ Brusset et al. (note 85).

not be able to identify when harm is being done and/or when contributions to positive peace have been made.

Measuring contribution to peace

Data collection is essential to ensure conflict sensitive programming and for operational purposes, and to ensure that interventions are evidence-based. In addition, it is central to reporting on and accountability to affected populations, and accountability to donors.

At the corporate level, WFP has developed a Corporate Results Framework (CRF), which guides the operationalization of the WFP strategic plan. This framework outlines targets and expected results at the corporate level, which then inform the design of country strategic plans (CSPs).⁸⁸ It aims to translate WFP's objectives into measurable results. To facilitate this, the CRF contains a list of corporate indicators at the impact, outcome and output levels.

At the country office level, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy defines key M&E priorities, approaches and processes to follow for data collection, analysis and reporting on learning, accountability and adaptive programming. M&E contributed to the development of the TOC, which outlines the steps through which programmes and related activities might lead to specific change (through outputs and outcomes), as well as the Line of Sight (which illustrates the vision and direction required to reach objectives) and the logical framework of the Interim CSP.⁸⁹ The Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) Unit comprises a Vulnerability, Assessment and Mapping (VAM) team and a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) unit at WFP South Sudan. It undertakes extensive data collection to generate evidence for measuring programme performance, accountability, learning and evidence-based programming.

The current CRF and indicator compendium, and by extension the country offices' monitoring systems, do not propose indicators for measuring WFP's contributions to peace. Most of the metrics that WFP uses to assess performance are corporate requirements that focus on operational and programmatic aspects and say little about the impact on the prospects for peace.

Once contributions to peace are central and pathways for action are outlined in the CSP, the M&E systems will be realigned to ensure measurement and monitoring of the contributions to peace. This should be accompanied by a retooling of the monitoring tools for the new peace indicators.

Challenges and steps forward

There is a high level of management support for contributions to peace, which enabled development of the C2P strategy at the country office level. This support translates into resources, including staff resources for teams like the Conflict, Security and Access Team (CSAT, see below), as well as time and money. However, this research has identified the need for WFP South Sudan to better communicate this strategy and ambition across all sectors, teams and field offices. WFP South Sudan has a long-standing presence in the country and significant geographical spread, which can lead to different degrees of involvement in strategies developed at the country office level that are later disseminated to the field levels. In that regard, the field offices play a critical role through their proximity to the population and peace and conflict dynamics, which

⁸⁸ World Food Programme, 'Corporate Results Framework, 2022–2025', 2 June 2022.

⁸⁹ The logical framework, also known as logframe, is a tool that sets out the expected results chain for WFP interventions and programmes. For more details see WFP Office of Evaluation, 'Technical note: Using logical models in evaluation', Aug. 2016.

suggests that field offices should not just be consulted, but play a key role in drafting, planning and refining these strategies over time—and not just at the outset. Perhaps most importantly, the changes to and adaptations of the monitoring systems already in place must respond to field level needs.

There is a clear need to articulate the strategy, and ongoing and future projects into the traditional WFP programming around food security and nutrition, with a clear structure to achieve unity and facilitate understanding of the strategy and its implementation. Without this understanding, implementation of the strategy is likely to be less efficient.

The measurement deep dive has also identified some elements that could constitute barriers to implementation of the strategy, such as the staff rotation characteristics of INGOs and humanitarian operations.⁹⁰ This challenge is acknowledged by WFP South Sudan, which must ensure that staff arriving in-country have a sound awareness and understanding of the strategy to guarantee its implementation. It must ensure that staff capacity in M&E is complemented by an understanding of peace and conflict dynamics, as well as WFP's strategy and ambition (see the recommendations).

Despite increasing humanitarian needs and shrinking budgets, measurement can help to deliver the C2P strategy. WFP South Sudan can start by measuring fidelity to the strategy it has established by taking a process tracing approach to complement existing outcome analyses. This would be an entry point for exploring whether any contribution to improving the prospects for peace is under way.

Moreover, the next CSP (2023–25) confirms WFP's engagement to build on its life-saving assistance to create pathways for resilience, development and peace. This three-year CSP initiates an overall 'integrated, sequenced and layered approach to WFP operations in South Sudan' over the next 13 years.⁹¹ The TOC developed in the document covers a 13-year timeframe comprising the initial three-year plan and two additional five-year CSPs. Inscribing operations and programmes within this longer-term approach allows both continuity and agility in refining and assessing operations over the next 13 years.

II. An understanding of contextual dynamics: A prerequisite for monitoring contributions to peace

Violent conflict and levels of organized violence in South Sudan inevitably affect WFP operations in various ways, from increased food insecurity to heightened staff and asset safety and security issues, and increased access constraints and impediments to data collection. This explains the need for the country office to closely track contextual developments on a regular basis when carrying out its mandate to ensure conflict-sensitive programming. In line with this reality, the Country Strategic Plan and the C2P strategy have prompted increased interest in conflict sensitivity. This is reflected in the growing relevance of context analysis and conflict dynamics analysis.

Against this background, WFP South Sudan has established a pivotal Conflict, Security and Access Team (CSAT), which is unique among WFP country offices thus far. It was formally established at WFP South Sudan in a collaborative framework. Within the team, some tasks and responsibilities, such as the drafting of analyses, are assigned to specific roles. However, the analysis is done jointly to capitalize on the comparative advantage of each position and the respective skills of the team members.

⁹⁰ Rameshwar, D. et al., 'Understanding employee turnover in humanitarian organizations', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 4 Apr. 2016.

⁹¹ WFP, 'South Sudan country strategic plan, 2023–2025', 2022.

Perhaps most importantly, the team plays a key role in making sense of the information collected and transmitting it to other teams such as the programme and emergency teams to ensure regular updates, as well as to senior management and donors through donor meetings and security briefs. There is also strong collaboration between the CSAT and VAM on large-scale data collection exercises such as the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS), which serves as the primary source of information for the humanitarian community in-country.

The CSAT brings together different capacities. First, the conflict and food security analyst deals with the impact of violence on WFP's mandate. Second, the operational security team deals with the impact of violence on the security and safety of WFP staff and assets. Third, the access team deals with the impact on WFP operations and access to communities in need.

Conflict analysis in fragile conflict and post-conflict settings for implementing actors

A sound understanding of contextual dynamics is a prerequisite for conflict-sensitive programming and identifying opportunities to contribute to peace (see box 3.3). In a nutshell, a conflict analysis must analyse the drivers of conflict, the underlying structural causes, proximate causes and the triggers of a conflict, as well as conflict actors and power dynamics, broader social trends and triggers for change. The analysis needs to be programme relevant and focused on the geographical areas where interventions take place to support humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. In addition, to provide a broader understanding and more nuanced picture of how factors and drivers of violence and vulnerability interact in the context of South Sudan, it is key that the conflict analysis considers interactions between local, regional and national conflict dynamics. A robust and continuous conflict analysis provides a sound understanding of the interactions between interventions and peace and conflict dynamics. This in turn informs conflict sensitivity, as a basis for working in conflict-affected settings. A conflict analysis must be a living document, updated regularly to incorporate emerging perspectives and contextual changes.⁹² A living document allows programmes and activities to be refined according to the complex environment as new events and changes emerge.

Elements of conflict analysis in South Sudan

Having identified at what level and how WFP intends to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in South Sudan, it needs to identify the root causes of vulnerability and instability.

WFP South Sudan conducts its own conflict analysis. This is shared internally and with members of the reference groups in which WFP is active. In its monthly conflict analysis and internal six-month conflict outlook, WFP South Sudan seeks to go beyond common explanations of organized violence to focus on the root causes and drivers of such violence. The focus is on physical, social and economic drivers, as well as the sources and manifestations of political inequity and isolation. This is based on the observation that the objectives of actors who engage in organized violence are often left unexplored. These objectives vary and there is no single typology. The strategy considers national, state and local, as well as grassroots objectives in order to frame organized violence. The narratives developed by actors intervening in South Sudan are a critical component of how strategies are established, priorities set and funds allocated.

⁹² Delgado et al. (note 79).

Box 3.3. Conflict analysis vs security analysis

Conflict and security analyses are often mistakenly thought to be interchangeable, given their similarities, but they apply a different lens. The role and purpose of conflict analyses differ from security analyses in their strict definitions. Reporting on security incidents, which entails their registration as event data in a security database, is complemented by an analysis of such events to identify patterns and trends in the behaviour of conflict actors. This analysis serves to inform the threats and risks facing humanitarian operators and programmes. This differs from conflict analysis, which concentrates its focus on the root causes or drivers of conflict and violence, the behaviour of conflict actors, power dynamics and broader social trends, among other things. In practice, these analyses look at similar aspects but from different angles or with different intended outputs. Those responsible for conducting these analyses are usually ascribed distinct but complementary roles as security analysts and conflict analysts.

Different and sometimes contradictory interpretations and perspectives among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors lead to different visions and responses on the ground. From a measurement perspective, the strategy recommends conducting more rigorous context analysis to inform WFP in-country interventions, which has led to an increased interest in and focus on conflict sensitivity and analysis of conflict dynamics by the country office. For WFP to intentionally contribute to peace, its intervention must be ‘grounded in contextual analysis that focuses on structural and causal explanations, provides a foundation for iterative and flexible updates, and presents a high-level framework for targeting WFP and joint programming’.⁹³ These elements explain the pivotal and unique role of the CSAT at WFP South Sudan.

The country office has also developed a conflict sensitivity assessment tool as guidance on conducting an in-depth analysis of peace and conflict dynamics, which is necessary to support the development of the C2P strategy. The conflict sensitivity assessment template can be filled out at the national, *payam* or *boma* levels. It provides three sets of questions to enable the teams to: understand the context in which assistance is being provided; understand the potential interaction between the context and WFP’s programming; and identify conflict sensitivity issues during implementation of activities and programming.⁹⁴ Once the first steps have been completed, every identified conflict is subject to a deeper and separate analysis. This assessment considers key aspects directly related to armed conflict, such as conflict drivers, root causes, conflict actors, local/regional/national and international dimensions and conflict intensity. To ensure conflict sensitivity and a sound awareness of the potential risks related to operations, the analysis focuses on the potential impact of conflict dynamics on food security and the risks of WFP’s interventions adding to existing tensions or creating new ones. These include through engagement with official or traditional figures, as well as risks related to the diversion or capture of aid. Perhaps more importantly for the measurement deep dive, this conflict sensitivity assessment explores potential windows of opportunity for contributing to peace.

These tools of conflict analysis serve to inform strategic and programmatic decision making at all levels and in various ways. The findings from this research demonstrate that these tools have been used to determine the feasibility of changing aid delivery mechanisms, informing the targeting of cash programmes and the feasibility of conducting biometric registration, among other things. These elements are central to WFP operations in South Sudan, which further stresses the pivotal role of the CSAT.

⁹³ WFP South Sudan (note 77).

⁹⁴ In hierarchical order, South Sudan is divided into states, counties, payams and bomas.

Security team

The security team oversees specific tasks and responsibilities, such as security analysis, risk assessments and security clearance at the field level, in cooperation with the access team.

Prior to conducting an analysis, the security team relies on the Security Information Management and Security Analysis System (SIMSAS) database developed by WFP HQ and consults open sources such as the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS). WFP South Sudan is also represented in the INGO forum, where it shares its own security reports and conducts joint programmes in some areas with other UN agencies. Cooperation is informal and takes place as the need arises, but there are also planned and regular consultations to ensure a minimum standard of information sharing, such as the weekly security cell chaired by the UNDSS. Depending on the location, the WFP South Sudan security team also deals with partners such as UNMISS.

The security team tracks the number of security incidents and their intensity and frequency, and runs risk assessments to establish the adequacy of mitigation measures.⁹⁵ A daily security report, a monthly security report and a monthly security brief ensure staff awareness of the latest security trends and dynamics. There is scope to make the best use of these assessments so that they highlight contributions to peace. The team can also track programmatic responses and the adjustments made by WFP in locations where there have been incidents. This demonstrates WFP's capacity to adapt to its context and respond to security dynamics over time. WFP can also search for evidence of positive change in social dynamics, such as improved social cohesion in areas where security incidents appear to be on the decline. Such evidence can serve as a starting point for observing links between negative peace and elements of positive peace, which WFP South Sudan aims to encourage through its C2P and CSP.

By providing a key understanding of peace and in-country conflict dynamics for managers and programme teams, the CSAT is a central element of implementation of WFP South Sudan's contribution to peace strategy.

Access team

The access team oversees logistics and is responsible for facilitating access for WFP and Logistics Cluster movements, and providing support with access challenges that arise during such movements.⁹⁶ The access team also consistently advocates for humanitarian space and humanitarian principles in hotspots of violence. This is done by building and maintaining strong relationships that can facilitate safe and unhindered movement and, where necessary, negotiating multistakeholder windows of security to facilitate the implementation of WFP interventions. The access team therefore interacts with a broad range of actors and has regular interactions with government stakeholders to guarantee the safety of humanitarian operations. To maintain access to hotspots, the team also proactively and continuously engages with relevant uniformed forces from government and opposition groups. Moreover, the highly dynamic context requires the team to conduct robust community-level engagement where decisions on who to engage with are based on detailed ethnographic analysis of the relationships between armed groups, community authority structures and local authorities. When these engagements take place is defined by the circumstances as events unfold. This spontaneity and broad range of contacts allow the country office to

⁹⁵ In person interview, WFP staff member, Juba, Feb. 2022.

⁹⁶ Given WFP's expertise in humanitarian logistics and long presence in the field, WFP leads the Logistics Cluster, a coordination mechanism that ensures efficient and effective emergency response.

collect information that needs to be factored in on an ongoing basis. There is as yet no structured methodology for sharing information, although this has been established informally. This suggests room for WFP South Sudan to build and institutionalize such a structure. As a result of the C2P strategy, however, the access team has moved from focusing mostly on logistics to focus more on analysis in collaboration with the conflict and food security analyst and the security team.

Sensitive information in a challenging environment

Given the highly volatile context, each report of a security incident must be investigated before confirmation to circumvent the subjectivity of reporting, as individuals or groups often report based on personal feelings, interests and past experiences. Communities, local actors, officials and INGO staff members are all exposed to reporting biases. WFP and partners have put in place verification processes to minimize reporting biases, such as the triangulation of sources. This has led to the development of a protocol for verifying information by the Jonglei GPAA Area Reference Group's social cohesion sub-group. The protocol helps to ensure that programming and incident response are based on accurate and trustworthy information. Although individual agencies have set up their own systems, this protocol aims to set a culture of systematic assessment of patterns of information. It provides a process for sharing relevant information with minimum requirements, among which are: assessment of source reliability, incident location and type, who was allegedly involved, casualties, loss of property and local response. The guidance also includes who the information can be shared with and how to respond; for instance, if a rumour emerges, programming channels can be used to counter it. The protocol recommends assessing source and information reliability to establish a final response matrix that is matched to an assessment of severity. Suggested responses range from document to triangulate, de-escalate or withdraw.

This research suggests a need to further explore how much perceptions influence reporting, and to make all qualitative accounts of security incidents more systematic. If the protocol proves successful in Jonglei and the GPAA, it can be adjusted for use in other regional contexts.

Some of the complexities of conflict and peacebuilding environments could also be captured by combining perception surveys, and safety and security indicators already collated by the country office (see below) with security incident maps. Perceptions of insecurity do not always match genuine insecurity, which means that community perceptions of safety and security can decline even when the number of security incidents is decreasing. Similarly, reported feelings of safety and security can improve regardless of an increase in security incidents. Identifying where such mismatches exist is important for increasing the contribution of WFP's programming to improving the prospects for peace, by knowing the kind of insecurities WFP can impact and how. While these issues may be beyond the mandate or ability of WFP to analyse or act on, sharing such data can ensure that the information reaches partners with dedicated capacities and resources.

III. Leaning into peace: Applied cases of measurement

Challenges

Monitoring, assessing or measuring the contribution to improving the prospects for peace in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings presents many challenges. Among those identified in the overall findings of phase 1 of this research and in the findings on Nigeria in phase 2 are challenges of attribution, intangibility and fragility, as well those

linked to the complexity of causality and constraints on data collection.⁹⁷ To some extent, these challenges are also apparent in South Sudan. However, there are ways in which WFP is already adapting its current systems in South Sudan.

To that end, the country office is demonstrating a strong ability to overcome challenges with data collection in hard-to-reach locations and conflict hotspots, which benefits the humanitarian community in-country.⁹⁸ Conflict systems are characterized by unpredictability. The levels and scope of violence across the country and areas where WFP operates hamper data collection in various ways, from a lack of or damaged infrastructure, to lack of access due to instability and political interference. Collecting data on a large scale is also an inherent challenge. Nonetheless, WFP South Sudan has found ways to circumvent some of these access constraints to deliver assistance, register beneficiaries and, to some extent, monitor implementation of its programmes in hard-to-reach locations. The country office has engaged in assessing the contextual change in behaviour and attitudes to which its interventions might lead, either directly or indirectly.

Towards more qualitative assessments: Engaging with individuals, households and communities

Peace is highly subjective, perceived in different ways by different people at different times.⁹⁹ It is often the case that peace and conflict are described in ways that are too distant from the communities that experience violence, from armed conflict to organized violence and structural violence. Research illustrates efforts to bring the measurement and understanding of peace closer to those experiencing it. Such nuances must be considered if peacebuilding interventions are to achieve the required change within and between individuals, in attitudes, behaviour and capacity, in the way institutions operate and at the cultural level, such as in discriminatory attitudes.¹⁰⁰ This means that WFP South Sudan must be familiar with how individuals, households and communities perceive peace in order to contribute to peace.

WFP South Sudan is committed to a people-centred approach to its activities and programming, as well as in the monitoring of food security, nutrition and contextual dynamics.¹⁰¹ The field monitoring unit is investing in qualitative research. Perceptions play a key role in both enabling peace and triggering conflict or violence. For this reason, the strategy developed by the country office puts community perceptions at the centre. When it comes to natural resources, and aid, perceptions of deprivation or threat of exclusion, including from aid targeting, are more likely to drive violence than absolute scarcity of resources.¹⁰² Garnering perceptions is also critical to making sense of quantitative data such as the global indicators used for food security.

All this reflects ongoing efforts to promote people's voices to ensure a sound 'understanding of the people we serve' and 'of their structures'.¹⁰³ This is also understood by government officials, who acknowledged that communities are the repository of ancestral and local knowledge, and are best placed to provide contextual knowledge

⁹⁷ Delgado et al. (note 79); and Riquier, M. and Delgado, C., *Improving the Prospects for Peace in Nigeria: Spotlight on Measurement* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2022).

⁹⁸ This research focuses on Jonglei and Unity states, where the SIPRI research team conducted research in Feb. 2022.

⁹⁹ Brusset et al. (note 85).

¹⁰⁰ Lederach, J. P., *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (United States Institute of Peace: Washington, DC, 1997).

¹⁰¹ It is also supported by the seven guiding principles in World Food Programme: Rome (WFP), WFP Strategic Plan, 2022–2026, First informal consultation (WFP: Rome, July 2021).

¹⁰² WFP South Sudan (note 77); and Riquier and Delgado (note 97).

¹⁰³ WFP South Sudan (note 77); and Interview, Juba, Feb. 2022.

for intervening actors: ‘People in southern Sudan know what is going on, they are the early warning systems . . . They know what is going on just by watching the birds, the elderly knows the forecasts’.¹⁰⁴

Research has emphasized the power of humanitarian agencies to construct and influence youth identities.¹⁰⁵ Alongside conceptions of youth as conflict actors, interlocutors have stressed the need to consider youth as agents of positive change and to factor in their perceptions and needs.¹⁰⁶ The youth and women already participate in peacebuilding activities, such as community dialogue where they share experiences of violence and reflect on the potential for positive change at the community level.¹⁰⁷

This research suggests there is a will to prioritize the participation of youth and engage effectively with young people through existing methodologies and channels. There is also potential to develop new qualitative approaches around community level engagement—at WFP but also jointly with partners. This can also be done by further encouraging the participation of youth, and young men in particular, in community level processes. To achieve this, lived experiences must be taken into account.

Through community-based participatory methods: Project Management Committees and Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms

Based on the above, WFP’s community-level data collection is particularly relevant for monitoring its contribution to improving the prospects for peace. WFP South Sudan engages at the community level in various ways, notably through Community-based Participatory Planning (CBPP), Project Management Committees (PMCs) and Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs).

First, WFP South Sudan uses community-led processes to define priorities and for targeting prior to programming. CBPP is usually used for resilience programming, but it can also be used for humanitarian programming. As part of ongoing efforts to measure contributions to peace and learn from communities, this method now includes a conflict analysis component and asks how communities feel about WFP taking a more proactive approach to contributing to peace, using indicators that capture whether ‘communities want WFP and its partners to intervene on issues of peace and violence?’.¹⁰⁸

As part of these participatory methods, WFP and partners supervise PMCs, which play a key role in ensuring community involvement in projects that will affect committee members’ lives. Elected beneficiaries are involved in project design, transfer selection and monitoring steps, which empowers communities with decision-making power. Nonetheless, WFP and partners are aware of the conflict sensitivity concerns related to participation in and composition of these committees. For example, community members who are marginalized or discriminated against are likely to remain outside these committees, which can entrench discriminatory practices and marginalization. Thus, mindful not to feed grievances, actors like WFP must first understand the social and power dynamics ahead of the activity, and monitor the potential positive and negative impacts of these committees on community dynamics both during and after the activity. This further highlights the importance of a thorough understanding of the contextual dynamics provided by the CSAT.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, non-WFP staff member, Juba, Feb. 2022.

¹⁰⁵ Apollo, A. and Mbah, M., ‘Engaging local youths in humanitarian response is not a matter of if but how’, *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, vol. 7, no. 10 (2022).

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Juba, Feb. 2022.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Development Programme, ‘Study on the traditional and changing role of gender and women in peacebuilding in South Sudan’, 4 Jan. 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, WFP staff member, Juba, Feb. 2022.

Post-distribution Monitoring (PDM) has a category dedicated to assessing the PMCs.¹⁰⁹ Among the questions asked of respondents, WFP assesses the awareness and satisfaction of community members regarding PMC composition, as well as decision making and communication between members of the PMC and the community. This data has the potential to constitute peacebuilding metrics, which could be achieved, for example, by an assessment of how WFP responds to negative feedback on the composition and participation of the PMCs, through the PDM and CFMs. This could be a way for WFP to assess its own progress. All in all, the PMCs are undoubtedly an invaluable mechanism for WFP to empower communities, disseminate key information and gather community perceptions of aid.

CFMs also constitute a central and unique element of community-based monitoring, since they allow communities to initiate communication with WFP or its partners. By capturing perceptions of assistance, this mechanism has great potential to provide information on peace and conflict dynamics. Furthermore, CFMs can be a practical platform for building and maintaining trust by providing opportunities for communities to feel heard and seen through the ability to ask a question, receive a response and potentially resolve issues. In the settings where WFP intervenes, trust built through CFMs primarily emanates from the organization's perceived legitimacy in its ability to respond, in a timely manner, to complaints and feedback. At the same time, trust is a prerequisite for beneficiaries to make complaints, especially sensitive complaints.

This research suggests that when WFP is collecting statistics on complaints and feedback, and reporting on any improvements related to the CFM, it is assessing its contributions to improving the prospects for peace. It also suggests different ways for WFP South Sudan to leverage this opportunity to assess how WFP programming interacts with peace and conflict dynamics and its own progress. WFP South Sudan could devise metrics for processing the information it already collects on CFMs as part of the monthly process monitoring, the PDM and FSNMS assessments. For example, it could monitor how many issues were identified and how many of these were resolved in a timely manner. In addition, it could monitor closed feedback loops and assess whether awareness of the CFM and its different channels has increased between assessment rounds. For WFP to move from being peace aware to being peace responsive will require more work to both monitor and identify progress and identify opportunities for engagement (see figure 3.1).¹¹⁰ These metrics can illustrate WFP's level of peace awareness through its awareness of the complaints shared by beneficiaries. By the same token, WFP can assess its own progress against the contribution to peace strategy and peace responsiveness (see figure 3.1) through its ability to garner information, identify issues and follow them up, or even resolve them where possible.

Leveraging surveys: Focus on the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System

WFP overall and WFP South Sudan have traditionally relied on surveys to collect data. Surveys have gained momentum in peace and conflict research as they have become a precious tool for capturing individual understandings of experience. They also capture perceptions of development to the extent that they capture indicators relevant to the design of policies and aid interventions.¹¹¹ For WFP in South Sudan, these include FSNMS, protection assessment surveys, intention surveys, security assessments and

¹⁰⁹ This is based on the questionnaire used for Round 2 of Post-distribution Monitoring in 2021, which was shared with the SIPRI research team.

¹¹⁰ Brusset et al. (note 85); see also Interpeace (note 86).

¹¹¹ De Juan, A. and Koos, C., 'Survey participation effects in conflict research', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 58, no. 4 (2021), pp. 623–39.

market surveys. Their key benefits are the large number of individuals or households that they reach, depending on the level of analysis, and the opportunities for longitudinal monitoring. WFP's long presence in South Sudan and its comprehensive survey structure put it in a unique position to gather much-needed micro-level data on conflict dynamics as they play out and affect communities.

Surveys are useful in flagging potential conflict sensitivity concerns by capturing people's perceptions around a specific aspect. For example, surveys help WFP to ensure that the most suitable transfer modality is selected to guarantee that food security needs are met while avoiding doing harm.

However, in such settings, there is a risk that participation in a survey creates expectations around assistance.¹¹² For example, it is possible that respondents might feel compelled to provide specific responses in order to continue receiving assistance or in the hope of future assistance, which is labelled acquiescence bias. In the context of South Sudan, surveyed beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries might perceive pressure to underreport or overreport community tensions or social cohesion for this reason. Perhaps most importantly, when unfulfilled, such expectations can lead to mistrust towards the agency.

Information sharing and the dissemination of survey findings between partners, a core aspect of monitoring systems, also presents conflict sensitivity concerns. In such highly dynamic and politicized environments, it is critical for partners, such as UN agencies, INGOs and local authorities, to establish safe environments conducive to the efficient dissemination and use of information, including data from assessments like the FSNMS.

The FSNMS is an independent and inter-agency multisectoral needs assessment intended to inform the humanitarian programme cycle. It is conducted by the WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).¹¹³ The survey assesses the food security and nutrition situation using food security outcome indicators, and household socio-demographic and food security profiles, to obtain livelihoods, income and expenditure data on humanitarian assistance received, shocks and coping, to name just a few.¹¹⁴ It follows a mixed methods approach involving a structured household survey completed in semi-structured focus groups, and key informant interviews. The actors mentioned above have also established FSNMS+, which provides an expanded FSNMS assessment together with partners: the International Organization for Migration and REACH in coordination with OCHA. Analysis of the data is combined with recommendations on each area of intervention according to the different responsibilities of the respective agencies.

Through these questions, the FSNMS is a precious tool allowing operating actors to better understand the impact of insecurity and other contextual factors on the food security and nutrition situation in South Sudan. Round 26 of data collection took place between July and September 2020, working with 8512 surveyed households. The findings reveal that insecurity remains the main impediment to taking part in agricultural activities for respondents (27.95%), while an increased proportion of households were facing insecurity. Such results need to be balanced with other findings that reveal that a shortage of seeds, floods and shortage of rain are among the top three challenges in agriculture. The reported negative impact of conflict varies. In Jonglei and Upper Nile

¹¹² De Juan and Koos (note 111), pp. 623–39.

¹¹³ REACH, 'Community perceptions of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan: Findings and recommendations', 1 July 2022.

¹¹⁴ South Sudan FSNMS Round 26 Report, *Food Security and Nutrition, July 2021*, 12 Jan. 2023.

states, flooding was the main reported constraint on livestock rearing. Meanwhile, insecurity was the main constraint in Lakes and Unity states.

In addition, questions covering conflict sensitivity themes and accountability to affected populations (AAP) provide insights on WFP's performance on conflict sensitivity, and thus indirect progress on its ambitions to contribute to improving the prospects for peace. Indeed, progress on conflict sensitivity and accountability illustrate the extent to which WFP acts on its understanding of peace and conflict dynamics. However, this research found that some key questions pertaining to AAP and conflict sensitivity were not included in the FSNMS in 2020.¹¹⁵ Some of these questions seem to have been included in the 2021 expanded FSNMS+ and were analysed by WFP partners.

An analysis of the findings of the 2021 FSNMS+ was led by REACH in collaboration with stakeholders that included WFP.¹¹⁶ The conclusions revealed gaps in information sharing around targeting, registration processes, gaps in assistance, access to assistance and CFMs. A lack of awareness of the targeting criteria and perceptions of corruption around targeting among both aid workers and community leaders feed mistrust in the targeting process. This could lead to mistrust of humanitarian, development and peace actors, as well as community tensions over perceived deliberate inclusion and exclusion of assistance (see the Stabilization report, TOC 1). Despite reported trust in the CFMs, almost half of responding households reported an inability to provide feedback and make complaints, especially child headed households, which is significant.¹¹⁷ Among the various sources and methods used to inform communities, the analysis suggests that the most frequent means of communication are radio, megaphones, telephones and word of mouth. Some community members lack access to these means, which can leave individuals and groups unaware and uninformed. Moreover, communities have also raised complaints around information not being timely enough to yield positive change. It is key that communities are not left behind as a lack of information at a specific time is likely to increase vulnerability.¹¹⁸ These findings further illustrate the need for WFP South Sudan and partners to improve information provision and to ensure that they continue to keep track of these perceptions over time.

Findings from the FSNMS (and FSNMS +) increase awareness of WFP's overall progress on conflict sensitivity, including AAP, information sharing and community awareness.¹¹⁹ This also contributes to awareness around potential negative impacts in order to minimize those, which is a prerequisite for contributing to peace.

There is potential for FSNMS+ assessments to capture the two-way impact of the recent funding cuts that led to ration cuts in 2021 and 2022 on food security and nutrition, and on insecurity. The current systems can be tweaked to include questions to explore the impact on delivery of reduced food rations on social dynamics between and within communities, including with IDPs and host communities, and on trust in aid workers.

Incorporating peacebuilding indicators into the monitoring systems

Conceptualizations of peace vary depending on perceptions of risk, risk exposure, local conditions and grievances. WFP's current monitoring system largely uses standardized and global metrics that allow for cross-country comparison.

¹¹⁵ This is the questionnaire shared with the SIPRI team at the time of the research.

¹¹⁶ In 2021, the sample size for FSNMS+ was 19 194 and 61 focus groups, and 34 interviews were conducted.

¹¹⁷ REACH (note 113).

¹¹⁸ REACH (note 113).

¹¹⁹ Interview, WFP staff member, Juba, Feb. 2022.

Contributions to improving the prospects for peace, which are context-driven, can also be identified using locally defined indicators that allow for the measurement of lived experiences of peace, security and conflict. It should be noted that identifying community-level indicators of peace is a rigorous process. However, WFP South Sudan has solid structures and processes in place to allow for the establishment and regular monitoring of community-identified local indicators over time.

As part of ongoing efforts to broaden the monitoring toolkit and prioritize the experiences of the communities directly exposed to violence and food insecurity, WFP South Sudan and partners are implementing new methodologies in complementarity with existing tools and methodologies. This is supported by the C2P strategy, which encourages the use of the Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) as an approach to M&E, since peace and conflict are best defined by the communities that experience these dynamics firsthand.¹²⁰

This has directly inspired development of the Measuring Safety and Security (MSS) methodology, part of the WFP peacebuilding programming (see the Stabilization report), and been supported by the RSRTF since 2021.¹²¹ The tool was designed by researchers from South Sudan and the Bridge Network to measure people's perceptions of safety and security in areas where WFP intervenes. Among the area-specific indicators are: freedom of movement for women, use of direct routes to markets for access and trade, cattle can graze freely, children can play and move freely, ability to sleep outside at night, people can farm on their farms, local chiefs' courts can address disputes, and cross-community trade. These confirm the key role of mobility for people and cattle, which explains why WFP situates the impact of conflict on mobility at the intersection of conflict and food security.¹²²

Evidence from this research reveals that consulting communities on the impact of assistance on peace and conflict dynamics can serve as an early warning system even when not originally intended as such. Indicators around peace and conflict dynamics from Koch in Unity State served as an early warning system in 2021. While the levels of violence had gone down in Central Unity, people's perceptions of safety and security surprisingly worsened. A decrease in violence might be expected to lead to more security but communities were aware of events unfolding at the national level in Juba and were expecting violence to increase as a result. In that case, the perceptions collected by the methodology served as a reliable early warning mechanism for the violence that eventually unfolded in 2022. This example demonstrates that community perceptions can be critical to understanding the context and, perhaps more importantly, applying a different lens to analyse evidence.

WFP should pursue its efforts to implement this methodology. The research suggests there is room to fine-tune the MSS methodology, including with a list of indicators that the country office can select and report on. This will facilitate implementation of the methodology by the country office. However, it will be critical to update the list of indicators regularly, given the highly dynamic context in South Sudan.

In addition, given that aspects related to roads and safe mobility appear in the MSS findings, WFP South Sudan could collect data on improvements to infrastructure—such as roads, which are considered effective at reducing isolation and inequity and

¹²⁰ Everyday Peace Indicators is a methodology developed to complement the use of traditional globally defined indicators of peace and conflict with locally defined indicators. Communities develop measures that reflect their lived experience of peace, security and conflict. See MacGinty, R., 'Indicators+: A proposal for everyday peace indicators', *Evaluation and Program Planning*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2013), pp. 56–63; and Brusset et al. (note 85).

¹²¹ United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund, South Sudan Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization, Resilience (South Sudan RSRTF), Revised terms of reference, 1 Dec. 2021.

¹²² WFP South Sudan (note 77).

connecting people, as in the examples discussed above—before and after to assess the changes in perception set against the context.¹²³

Peace and security indicators in Post-distribution Monitoring and ethnographic diaries

As illustrated above, WFP South Sudan relies on various tools, methods and assessments to collect information and remain peace aware. To this end, it has launched efforts to develop locally defined indicators, but has also included new indicators in traditional monitoring such as the PDM. PDM is the most common data collection outcome measurement.¹²⁴ It comprises six-monthly outcome monitoring of GFD under both crisis-affected response and urban programme or FFA activities with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. It follows a semi-standardized process at a specific point in time (following food or CBT distribution) and targets individuals or households to get a better understanding of context and people's perceptions, and to improve assistance. Group discussions can also be conducted at the community level.

As part of internal efforts to conduct more qualitative assessments, WFP South Sudan included a 'peacebuilding' category for the first time in 2021 to gauge progress towards peace and security, and assess the impact of ongoing peace and security activities in the second round of the PDM.

The first round of indicators was included based on qualitative assessments conducted by the Bridge Network, with different modules based on the questions asked. These questions span six months and vary according to seasonality, which affects activities such as weddings and other ceremonies that are usually suspended for several months, while some indicators have a rather short-term timeline, such as access to markets. It should be noted that there is complementarity between this new category and questions related to security disseminated in other categories such as 'taxation' or 'targeting'.

Analysis of these indicators by the technical teams defines whether they will be included in the following rounds of assessment. However, this analysis faces several challenges, among which is the difficulty of running a comparison. These are conducted in the same geographical areas but, as seen above, seasonality impacts the data collection and populations are mobile, which means that comparison is only possible from a geographical standpoint. Ultimately, the country office aims to formalize the inclusion of such indicators in the PDM based on the outcome of these initial rounds.¹²⁵

This is complemented by innovative methods such as the monthly ethnographic diary, an integral element of the MSS methodology, which captures the same indicators over time. Born out of a willingness to complement data collection with qualitative evidence from the field, the RSRTF has financed development of the ethnographic diary methodology, which embeds researchers in communities and public spaces where communities gather, such as markets.

Their proximity and lack of apparent affiliation with WFP or any local partner make it possible to collect unique information that communities might not have been willing to share with official representatives of INGOs or UN agencies. Indeed, information captured by formal channels of communication is open to various biases that can interfere with data collection, such as acquiescence bias or tendencies to overreport or underreport certain aspects and events based on perceived expectations of INGOS (see surveys). Methodologies such as the monthly ethnographic diary significantly reduce exposure to certain biases. By listening to conversations held in public, a researcher is

¹²³ WFP South Sudan (note 77); For more on infrastructure, see the Stabilization report, TOC 1.

¹²⁴ WFP Guidance on Outcome Monitoring, unpublished.

¹²⁵ This research was conducted prior to the 2022 round of Post-distribution Monitoring (PDM), which means that the findings from the PDM could not be communicated to the SIPRI team.

likely to obtain information on peace and conflict dynamics and people's perceptions of assistance.

In one example, a researcher reported a positive impact of WFP's assistance in increasing mobilization costs when people in the markets shared their reluctance to join a large-scale ongoing mobilization as this would lead to a loss of the livelihood they had gained from assistance: 'we are going to stay and continue this'.¹²⁶ At the same time, this methodology also revealed conflict sensitivity concerns related to WFP's assistance that the agency must address, such as the potential for targeting to create tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Related research in South Sudan also indicates the potential for tensions to arise between members of the host community and IDPs in the context of the targeting and distribution of assistance. However, these tensions are far from inevitable (see the Stabilization report, TOC 1).

The similarity between the indicators measured by the ethnographic diaries and the PDM suggests complementarity rather than overlap between the methodologies, and thus potential complementarity in the findings. WFP South Sudan can start to triangulate and compare the findings over time. To achieve this, the country office needs to pursue further use of the methodology. These processes will require joint working between technical teams and programme teams to make sense of the data and better inform programming. When triangulated with other assessments, this methodology has tremendous potential to capture contributions to improving the prospects for peace and feed into programming.

Indicators from peacebuilding programming

Community dialogues and peace conferences also represent opportunities for WFP to collect information on social aspects related to peace, such as social cohesion. These relate to safety and security indicators such as those captured by the PDM and MSS methodologies (see above).

Although peace conferences and community dialogues are inscribed in broader interventions against which their impact must be measured, there is potential to include aspects of or even indicators on social dynamics in the monitoring of the dialogue. On this basis, it is critical to acknowledge that such dialogues are process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented. Behavioural and societal changes take time, are not linear and take place at different levels. Community dialogues and peace conferences are not always successful, and progress is not necessarily linear, as community leaders confirmed when mentioning failed attempts to bring people together and the return of violence. Indeed, there are myriad dialogue events across South Sudan on a regular basis, which are often not situated as part of a longer-term process, where material support is provided for specific dialogue events but no resources made available for implementation. The WFP consortium working on peacebuilding in Jonglei/GPAA has recognized that dialogues should only be supported if they are part of a systematic process with clear accountability mechanisms and sustained engagement on the ground.

The sustainability of positive change related to a dialogue process is challenging to measure due to the myriad external factors. Although not tangible per se, these changes can have tangible consequences for peace and conflict dynamics and directly improve the security and safety of communities. To circumvent the complexity of tracking these changes outside the room, it is possible to start by monitoring concrete steps during the process and after the process has ended. However, this also depends on the conditions in which the process is being carried out, which means this must be planned at the

¹²⁶ Interview, WFP staff member, May 2022.

outset. Perhaps most importantly, tracking concrete steps during the process also provides information on WFP performance and that of its partners, and their ability to take a conflict-sensitive approach, which can be done by collecting the perceptions not only of participants but also of the organizers and implementers, as well as monitoring interactions between participants, and external contextual dynamics and perceptions of security.

Anecdotal evidence

WFP's and partners' ears and eyes are in the field, in contact with the communities that inevitably share personal experiences, stories and observations around peace and conflict dynamics, and of assistance. This amounts to anecdotal evidence, which is commonly defined as evidence that relies on individual or group observations, and that is collected in a non-systematic manner. In the case of WFP and partners, this can, for example, be any insights collected during activities and the delivery of assistance, whether through formal communication channels or informal interactions. This research indicates there is interest in the country office in using this type of evidence. Findings from the interviews reveal that communities share both positive and negative impacts of interventions.¹²⁷ Yet, it also suggests that although these experiences contain invaluable information on contextual dynamics, root causes of violence, social cohesion and the like, they are often missed in the systems because they are shared in a non-systematic manner.¹²⁸ Indeed, at the corporate level, this type of evidence is disregarded by WFP data collection standards/requirements, as it is not considered evidence.

Compiling, assessing and making use of this type of evidence present inherent challenges of credibility, comparability, validity and reliability. Nonetheless, there are ways to circumvent some of these to amplify voices and stories not captured by formal tools. This research has identified several existing channels that could be voice amplifiers for anecdotal evidence.

First and foremost is the expansion of ethnographic diaries, which already compile anecdotal evidence and have proved useful and reliable tools. Second, a good case in point highlighted during in-country and remote consultations is the weekly situation report submitted by field offices to the country office. This is an operational report on the programme, activities and developments at each field office from every area, which provides an overview of operations, expectations and plans for the following week. Perhaps most importantly, there is space for field offices to flag specific issues, and to share additional information, pictures and narratives. The type and amount of information the field offices share vary based on the size of operations and capacities, which means that the amount and quality of input varies. In the light of ongoing efforts to improve information management with field offices, there are opportunities to leverage this reporting tool and capitalize on the information the field office obtains from the field.

Overall, although anecdotal evidence does not follow traditional or formal data collection processes, this is an avenue worth exploring for WFP and its partners. It can serve as a repository of examples of the impact of WFP's assistance on food security, and on peace and conflict dynamics to inform programming and the monitoring of its contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

¹²⁷ Interview, Bor, Feb. 2022; remote interview, Mar. 2022; and remote interview, May 2022.

¹²⁸ Interview, Bor, Feb. 2022; and remote interviews, May 2022.

4. Conclusions

This report has explored the WFP's monitoring and measurement systems and modalities in South Sudan, and proposed ways to leverage existing processes and methods to better capture evidence on WFP contributions to improving the prospects for peace. The report makes 11 recommendations:

Recommendations

1. WFP South Sudan's country office management must ensure that its ambition and strategy are communicated to all staff, with special attention to field offices. This will require continuous communication and socialization of the strategy to ensure its progress. Possible disruptive effects linked to staff rotation will need to be mitigated by ensuring that staff arriving in country gain a sound awareness and understanding of what WFP South Sudan is trying to achieve.
2. The country office and management must invest in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of contributions to peace. To that effect, the M&E strategy, approach, methodology and tools will need to be revised.
3. The country office and management must encourage increased understanding of peace and conflict dynamics and peace measurement. To achieve this, it should consider raising awareness of the strategies already in place, including in field offices, and training the M&E teams on the measurement and monitoring of contributions to peace.
4. The country office must strengthen its human resources and allocate time to make sense of the data collected. More dedicated time and staff can enable enhanced analysis of the available data, including, for example, correlation analysis.
5. WFP South Sudan management and the Conflict Security and Access Team (CSAT) must pursue efforts to roll out the tools and methodologies developed in support of conflict analysis and contextual understanding. In this way, the team will be able to identify the timing of and areas for engagement with, and situate where WFP's interventions are contributing—either directly or indirectly—to improving the prospects for peace.
6. Security incident analysis and the tracking of WFP programmatic response should be combined to track WFP's ability to adapt and respond to a changing environment. In locations where security incidents are in decline, WFP can search for evidence of positive change in social dynamics.
7. The CSAT should continue to investigate what the perceptual data says about security, peace and conflict dynamics. Expansion of the protocol designed to analyse sensitive information in Jonglei and the GPAA to other states and counties provides an opportunity to achieve this.
8. The country office must conduct and continue to expand qualitative assessments to translate local knowledge and perceptions into programmatic changes to improve the prospects for peace. For example, it must

continue to collect data related to perceptions of assistance, information sharing and awareness among communities as part of Post-distribution Monitoring and of Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System plus (FSNMS+).

9. M&E teams should select and redefine the peace-related indicators to be incorporated into existing monitoring processes; and track the indicators over time to capture the impact of WFP activities, such as community-led processes on social dynamics or social cohesion, among other things. They should also consider a longer timeframe to observe longer-term changes in relational dynamics, based on the Country Strategic Plan's new 13-year horizon.
10. M&E teams should provide an overview of existing data collection tools and methodologies for all processes currently in use, in order to facilitate the reconciliation and triangulation of findings on similar indicators captured by different tools.
11. The WFP country office, and more specifically programme and technical teams, must continue to work with and through partners—UN agencies, INGOs and local peacebuilding NGOs—on implementation of the South Sudan country office Contribution to Peace Strategy, through information sharing and continuing to leverage comparative advantages to improve conflict sensitivity and identify windows of opportunity.

About the author

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