



SOUTH SUDAN

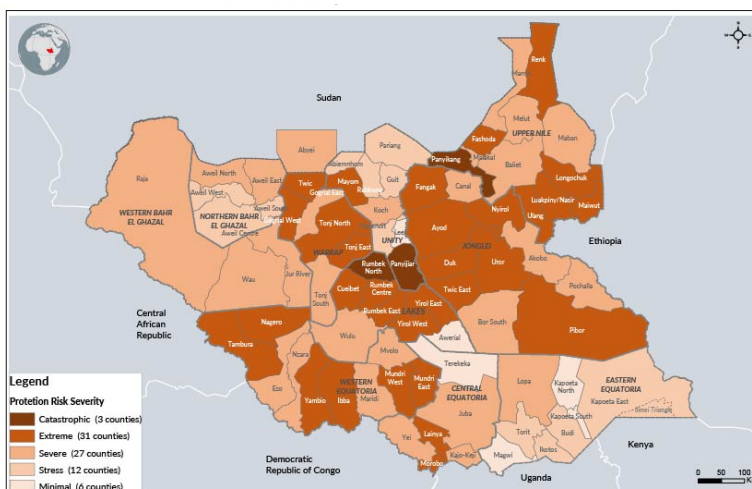
Protection Analysis Update

Economic Crisis and Imminent Threat of Floods Increase Protection Risks in the Country

JUNE 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are over 2.3 million displaced persons throughout South Sudan with conflict and natural disasters being the leading drivers of displacement. Food insecurity caused by prolonged droughts or flooding, along with the loss of livestock and livelihoods, intercommunal violence, cattle raids, killings, and land conflicts, are among the main causes of displacement. Coupled with the arrival of refugees and returnees from Sudan who require additional assistance in a country already strained by limited natural resources, inflation, and weak rule of law, the protection risks for civilians in South Sudan are extensive and multilayered. Women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are particularly affected by unaddressed human rights violations and impunity, often forcing them into negative coping mechanisms.



The five most occurring protection risks requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

1. **Gender-Based Violence**
2. **Theft, Extortion, Forced Eviction, and Destruction of Personal Property**
3. **Discrimination and Stigmatization, Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services and/or Humanitarian Access**
4. **Unlawful Impediments or Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Siege and Forced Displacement**
5. **Child and Forced Family Separation**

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

Considering the compounded effect of protection risks in South Sudan, it is of utmost importance to:

- Provide humanitarian and development (re)integration support to Returnees from Sudan and Ethiopia across the country in order to avoid secondary movement and further increase of protection risks.
- The government, as the primary duty bearer, must deliver on its protection obligations towards the people they govern across South Sudan, strengthening national and local systems to prevent, mitigate and respond to violations and end impunity.
- Increase efforts between humanitarian and development actors, towards inclusive and non-discriminatory systems building, sustainable solutions, and long-term development assistance, to meet peoples’ needs, mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, and respond effectively to violations.

UPDATE ON PROTECTION RISKS SEVERITY | APRIL – JUNE 2024

MINIMAL	STRESS	SEVERE	EXTREME	CATASTROPHIC
Awerial, Leer, Magwi, Kapoeta South, Terekeka, Kapoeta North	Ikotos, Torit, Kapoeta East, Pariang, Abiemnhom, Aweil West, Guit, Mayendit, Budi, Aweil Centre, Aweil South, Rubkona	Juba, Aweil East, Aweil North, Lafon, Baliet, Abyei Region, Koch, Jur River, Mvolo, Maridi, Canal/Pigi, Wulu, Raja, Malakal, Melut, Maban, Tonj South, Bor South, Ezo, Nzara, Pochalla, Manyo, Yei, Gogrial East, Akobo, Wau	Kajo-keji, Ayod, Nyirol, Renk, Ibba, Cueurbet, Tonj East, Tambura, Duk, Fangak, Pibor, Twic East, Uror, Ulang, Nagero, Yirol East, Yirol West, Mayom, Mundri East, Maiwut, Gogrial West, Mundri West, Lainya, Morobo, Longochuk, Yambio, Rumbek Centre, Tonj North, Fashoda, Rumbek East, Twic, Luakpiny/Nasir, Panyijiar	Rumbek North, Panyikang, Panyijiar

Compared to the first quarter of 2024, three counties reached the Catastrophic protection risk status while a further 32 counties were assessed as extreme compared to only four in the previous quarter.

CONTEXT

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES	SSD COUNTIES FEATURING HIGH PROTECTION RISKS	PROTECTION CLUSTER PIN FOR 2024	IDPs	RETURNEES FROM SUDAN
1,087	77%	5.53M	2.06M	0.56M

The ongoing conflicts and attacks on civilians have exacerbated the food crisis caused by drought and/or flooding severely impacting the resilience of agropastoral communities that comprise a large number of the population in South Sudan. Losses of livestock due to widespread flooding further drive intercommunal hostilities. This is especially the case in areas that are heavily socio-economically dependent on cattle herding sparking high-fatality cattle raids and new waves of violence-induced displacement. This violence affects both remote areas and main supply routes and includes human rights violations such as maiming, killing, injury, rape, abduction, looting, and destruction of housing and property.



“I saw two people die of hunger. One boy and one old woman died en route to collect wild fruits”.

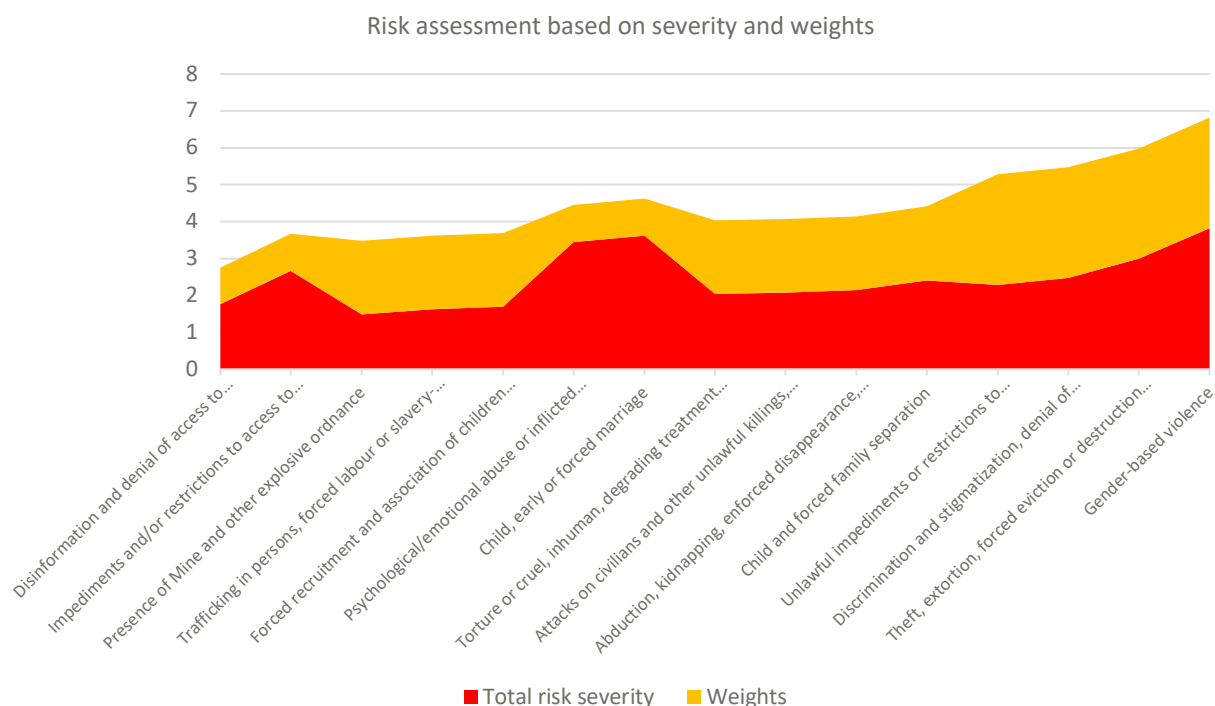
A local community member shared to AFAA protection staff in Panyijiar county of Upper Nile State.

The overall situation in Panyijiar is extremely grave due to flood and conflict-induced lack of livelihood. Famine is rampant and communities depend on the collection of water lilies and other plants for survival. In turn people resort to negative coping mechanisms including family separations, sexual violence, and child recruitment.

The protection environment is characterized by obstacles to access for humanitarian workers and people in need of assistance, limited and unequal service provision, weak or absent protection systems, low awareness of basic rights, and discriminatory and harmful socio-cultural norms related to gender. Additionally, discriminatory practices exclude minority clans and marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, and disproportionately impact women, children, and older persons.

The escalating conflict in Sudan continues to pose substantial challenges for the protection of vulnerable populations in neighboring South Sudan. As the crisis deepens, the need for effective and comprehensive protection strategies becomes increasingly urgent. Displaced individuals, particularly women and children, face heightened risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse, further exacerbating the already fragile humanitarian situation. The protection risk implications of the Sudan conflict on the South Sudan humanitarian response are multifaceted and deeply concerning. As the conflict drives a growing number of refugees and returnees into South Sudan, the demand for protection services increases exponentially. Displaced populations, particularly women, children, and marginalized groups, are at heightened risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Human trafficking, forced labor, and recruitment into armed groups are among the many protection challenges that arise from this crisis.

PROTECTION RISKS



The Protection Cluster’s Protection Monitoring (PROMO) Working Group used the protection risk severity assessment based on the [Protection Analytical Framework \(PAF\)](#), through a [structured analytical process](#). The identified risks were contextualized using a weighted framework that considers the scope of work of humanitarian actors. Based on this, the top five most acute risks in the country were classified, shown from right to left in the above graph.

During the Protection Risk Assessment conducted in the second quarter of 2024 in South Sudan¹, six counties were identified as having minimal protection risk, 12 counties were under protection stress, and 27 counties were experiencing severe protection risks. Alarming, **31 counties** (over 40% of South Sudan) were found to be in a state of **extreme protection risk**, while three additional counties were assessed as **overall catastrophic**.

RISK 1 Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is critical in South Sudan, with women and children at high risk of sexual violence, harassment, and domestic violence.² WHO (2018) reports that 34% of women aged 15-64 have experienced physical violence and 13.5% sexual violence in their lifetime.³ UNICEF (2019) found that 65% of women and girls experienced physical and/or sexual violence, and 51% suffered intimate partner violence, often starting before age 18.⁴ Alarming, GBV prevalence has persisted and is nearing epidemic proportions.^{5 6}

¹ The Protection Cluster in South Sudan quarterly organizes sub-national workshops with state-level cluster coordination mechanisms to assess the severity of the [15 globally recognized Protection Risks](#) at the county level.

² IRC 06/03/2024

³ UNFPA 24/03/2023

⁴ SSWEN 12/10/2021

⁵ UNFPA 24/03/2023

⁶ UNICEF 12/2019

Specific regions, like Unity State, reported higher incidents of GBV, with 77% involving rape or gang rape, and 23% other forms of violence such as unlawful killing, flogging, beating, sexual molestation, and forced nudity in 2021.⁷ From January to May 2024, 43% of PMS respondents reported GBV in their communities.⁸ In Yei County, 45% of surveyed households faced threats against women and girls, including rape (32%), sexual assault (26%), physical assault (23%), forced marriages (20%), and domestic violence (17%).⁹ The widespread issue is also echoed in PMS data where GBV is a top reason for seeking justice.

GBV in South Sudan is driven by economic hardships, cultural norms, and systemic issues which can force negative coping mechanisms, while food insecurity, conflict, flooding, and limited livelihood opportunities contribute to violence against women. Cultural beliefs that women should tolerate violence for family unity perpetuate harmful practices, with men often feeling justified in beating their wives.^{10 11}

Patriarchal attitudes increase risks for girls, especially during conflicts and displacement as cultural norms view girls as financial assets due to high bride prices, and they are often considered the responsibility of the extended family. This reinforces gender inequality and limits women's rights to housing, land property and family planning. Conflicts exacerbate sexual assault and rape by breaking down community protection structures¹² showing intimate partner violence (IPV), including emotional and physical abuse and resource denial, is prevalent, constituting over 50% of reported cases. Men often resort to violence due to alcohol intoxication, women leaving without informing them and burning food.

Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) in South Sudan is rooted in historical and pervasive gender inequality and discrimination against women, within a patriarchal and militarized society where women and girls are subordinate to men and boys. The persistence of CRSV is partly due to the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators profoundly impacting victims, their families, and communities.¹³ For example, Healthcare workers, especially those involved in family planning, face attacks and threats, particularly in conflict zones like Unity State, where health facilities have been ransacked. GBV survivors suffer psychological trauma, physical injuries, social stigma, and sexually transmitted diseases. The violence leads to school dropouts and limited access to education for girls, further entrenching gender inequality. In extreme cases, GBV results in disappearances, killings, or suicides. The lack of a robust justice system and weak rule of law prevent the effective prevention and prosecution of GBV cases.^{14 15}

Reporting GBV incidents can lead to life-threatening retaliation, silencing victims and allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. PMS data from January to May 2024 shows fear of stigma as the top barrier to reporting, while the majority of GBV victims are women and girls, underreporting is particularly severe for men and boys.^{16 17} Despite the existence of two GBV courts in Juba, inefficiencies due to inadequate judicial infrastructure, capacity, and follow-up mechanisms hinder their effectiveness. The number of GBV cases has doubled since the courts were established in 2020, despite the stigma around reporting.¹⁸ PMS data indicates that families often resort to alternative coping mechanisms, such as compensation paid to families or marriage to the perpetrator.¹⁹

⁷ IRC 06/03/2024

⁸ GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

⁹ AVSI 09/02/2023

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Development Initiatives 01/02/2023

¹² Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

¹³ Amnesty International 18/05/2022

¹⁴ Amnesty International 18/05/2022

¹⁵ CSRF 30/08/2023

¹⁶ Amnesty International 18/05/2022

¹⁷ CSRF 30/08/2023

¹⁸ The City Review, 24/11/2022

¹⁹ GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

RISK 2 Theft, Extortion, Forced Eviction and Destruction of Personal Property

The risk of theft, extortion, forced eviction, and the destruction of personal property in South Sudan is driven by a complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors. According to protection monitoring data, returnees and other forcibly displaced persons frequently experience theft and harassment from host community members, particularly during evening hours²⁰. PMS data from January to April 2024, indicates theft or extortion was the fourth most cited reason for seeking justice. Similarly, community consultations in Ajuong Thok, Pamir, and Makpandu have identified increased tensions and theft among displaced communities, especially those receiving higher rations, as well as between displaced and host communities, where theft of animals and produce is common²¹.

A perceived imbalance between displaced and host communities often leads to theft from returnees and other forcibly displaced persons, exacerbated by natural disasters that contribute to continuous movement and loss of access to land. Theft of property especially in the urban centres is on the rise due to the economic situation where the cost of living is high and people resort to stealing other people's property to enable them to survive. The high number of stolen boda bodas (motorcycle taxis commonly found in East Africa) in Juba, as well as rampant mugging early in the morning and at night. Extortion by people in authority and power is equally on the rise as most people are not able to pay their various fees on property, especially on time. Displaced individuals settling on non-owned land face evictions, and government planning for specific locations can result in forced displacement.

Land grabbing is of particular concern, closely linked to the lack of tenure. Secondary occupation, associated with illegal occupation, has led to numerous disputes over housing, land, and property ownership. Limited access to land, inadequate housing, and forced evictions further exacerbate these issues. Inequitable land tenure arrangements contribute to land inequality and unfair distribution in both rural and urban areas, adversely affecting the rights of displaced populations, their living conditions, social inclusion, and access to opportunities.

Forced evictions Juba County have resulted in increased insecurity, with landowners being accused of supporting rebel groups when they defend their rights²². This environment of instability and violence undermines social cohesion and community resilience, leaving many without access to their property or means of livelihood. The difficulty in responding sometimes lies in the fact that all communities are both actors in and victims of these abductions. Women particularly face issues accessing land rights, while they can purchase land, they face inheritance issues and can be forcefully evicted if male relatives contest land ownership.

Cattle raiding, rooted in rites of passage, cycles of revenge, and wealth acquisition, is becoming a protracted issue due to scarce resources and the availability of arms, making it increasingly politicized. Corruption, impunity, lack of access to justice, economic downturn, and unemployment are common drivers of these threats, creating pockets of insecurity, such as in Yei, which lead to eviction and forced displacement. Continuous evictions contribute to secondary displacement and increase the number of street children and beggars. The capacity to address and mitigate these threats is limited, but there are efforts within the community to manage the situation. Community-based initiatives, such as the training of Community Watch Groups in Malakal PoC, are steps towards improving security but remain insufficient.²³

The raids in Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area have resulted in significant casualties and continuous threats to civilian protection²⁴. Revenge killings fueled by cattle raiding, particularly in Lakes State and its neighboring regions, such as Unity and Warrap, were identified as a major source of conflict. In Duk County, a cattle raid in January 2024

²⁰ Nutrition Cluster, UNICEF, WFP 11/08/2023

²¹ WFP UNHCR 27/12/2023

²² Radio Tamazuj, 16/11/2023

²³ Internews 06/03/2024

²⁴ UNMISS 16/03/2023

left at least 10 people dead and more than 20 wounded, with attackers stealing over 7,000 cattle²⁵. Such raids exacerbate ethnic and sectarian conflicts, leading to further displacement and impoverishment of communities.^{26 27}

One proactive measure by the community involves cattle keepers responsible for protecting the livestock of the Dinka tribe. Due to the unstable security and political landscape, these groups have taken up arms and continue to conduct cattle raids throughout Warrap State.²⁸ The administration of Warrap State has responded by prohibiting any sale or purchase of livestock unless a permit is issued by government agencies, specifying the owner, area of origin, and other relevant information, but enforcement challenges persist.^{29 30} Government measures, like requiring permits for livestock transactions in Warrap State to curb cattle raiding, indicate attempts by the government to also to tackle the issue, but enforcement challenges persist.³¹

RISK 3

Discrimination and Stigmatization, Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services and/or Humanitarian Access

During the reporting period (January to May 2024), **45% of KIs interviewed noted a lack of access to humanitarian assistance.** The two primary reasons are, corruption/bribery, lack of awareness of availability of services and lack of registration card/food distribution card to access services.³² For internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, refugees, and host communities, tribalism and corruption can also lead to discrimination and create challenges to accessing humanitarian aid and basic services.

People are denied resources due to reasons such as lack of legal documentation. These documents include birth certificates, nationality certificates, and passports are only printed in Juba thus the people who cannot travel to Juba can process them through the state Directorate of Civil Registry Nationality Passport and Immigration and this can take up to 6 months or more to attain any of these documents, as the directorate faces shortages in the material needed to produce these documents. Thus, it is difficult for most to access essential services and eventually are discriminated and denied resources.

Tribalism can exacerbate access challenges by influencing the distribution of humanitarian assistance, as certain groups can be prioritized over others if biased tribal leaders are involved in the process³³. Overall, national elites often amplify tribal sentiments for personal gain, resulting in biased resource distribution that favors their tribal affiliations.³⁴ This lack of governance and oversight allows local leaders to discriminate and abuse power, hindering equitable access to humanitarian aid and perpetuating community divisions, thereby making it harder for vulnerable populations like IDPs and returnees to receive needed assistance. The consequences of these threats are far-reaching as both IDPs and other forcibly displaced persons face intercommunal conflict over resources due to tribalism and favoritism increasing the risk of statelessness which leaves individuals without legal protection or access to basic rights and services.

Data from Malakal PoC highlights further challenges particularly for elderly people, separated from their families, missed out on provisions and expressed concerns about damaged benches at distribution sites. Isolated cases of missing names in the biometric system impacted access to food distributions, leading to requests for faster cross-checking. Additionally, some returnees missed services due to non-compliance with registration procedures or attempts to double register in Malakal town camps and the PoC³⁵. People with disabilities face additional barriers, such as a lack of sex and age-disaggregated data, stigma, and non-inclusive programming, which exclude them from accessing essential services.³⁶ According to PMS data

²⁵ VOA, 05/01/2024

²⁶ The City Review 12/08/2023

²⁷ Geneva call 21/12/2023

²⁸ Geneva call 21/12/2023

²⁹ The City Review 12/08/2023

³⁰ Geneva call 21/12/2023

³¹ Geneva call 21/12/2023

³² GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

³³ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

³⁴ FES 19/04/2024

³⁵ Internews 06/03/2024

³⁶ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

(January to May 2024), people with disabilities are among the groups most impacted by the lack of access to humanitarian assistance.³⁷

The risk of statelessness also arises when documentation is lost and can only be reissued based on appearance, further marginalizing individuals. Obtaining nationality documents is a challenging process where individuals must produce an age assessment or birth certificate, a blood test, and four photographs³⁸ where a national identity card is USD 25 while reclaiming a lost nationality certificate costs around USD 50.³⁹ (According to CCCM in SSD, unskilled daily labor rates in April amounted to approximately 2\$ which leaves many in a position of unattainability in regards to civil documentation). These high fees, combined with long travel distances and corruption—often in the form of demands for bribes—create significant access constraints, especially those with mobility issues, and limited financial means. Additionally, applicants must find a credible witness who can attest to their origin. These witnesses can be community leaders, traditional authorities, church leaders, Payam/Boma officials, or sub-chiefs for their tribe⁴⁰. This issue primarily affects returnees, and with no official statistics on their numbers, it is difficult to estimate the extent of the problem as overall there are no national procedures in place to facilitate the provision of identity documents for returnees⁴¹.

During the reporting period (January to May 2024), **36% of KIs noted a lack of access to justice challenging their community**. The lack of courts in areas where KIs live is also noted as an obstacle to accessing justice.⁴² This has led to an overwhelming backlog of cases, prolonged detention, and prison overcrowding with Juba National Prison being overcrowded at 476% over capacity⁴³. Some initiatives such as mobile courts have worked to address some of these challenges by bringing justice to locations lacking access to formal legal systems but the challenges persist. According to the PMS data for April and May, the vast majority of KIs noted **customary law as the most preferred justice mechanism**. With an estimated 80%⁴⁴ to 90%⁴⁵ using traditional courts headed by local chiefs that are easily accessible and less bureaucratic compared to official routes they are also conducted in open air, allowing the community to listen to the arguments and the rulings.⁴⁶

RISK 4

Unlawful Impediments or Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Siege and Forced Displacement

Cyclical natural disasters, particularly extreme floods, contribute to new displacement and increase the number of conflict-related returnees from neighboring countries. Political and economic violence by state and non-state actors in areas like Yei leads to evictions and forced displacement. According to PMS data (Jan-May 2024), the primary reasons for movement restrictions are fear of death or injury, fear of GBV, checkpoints and/or screening procedures, fear of arrest or detention, and lack of identity documents⁴⁷.

Displacement severely impacts social cohesion and stability within communities. The influx of displaced individuals strains resources and leads to tensions between host communities and newcomers. In Ayod County, a rapid needs assessment revealed that unequal access to livelihoods was a significant challenge for social cohesion among IDPs, returnees, and host communities.⁴⁸ In June 2023, a conflict in Malakal PoC, a key area for returnees from Sudan, resulted in at least 20 deaths and the destruction of hundreds of shelters, forcing many to move to Malakal town for safety. This incident is part of a broader pattern of tensions and clashes in the Malakal corridor, restricting community movement and access to

³⁷ GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

³⁸ UNHCR, last accessed 05/06/2024

³⁹ Eye Radio, 29/11/2022

⁴⁰ UNHCR, last accessed 05/06/2024

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, 22/04/2024

⁴² GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

⁴³ UNDP, 06/03/2024

⁴⁴ UNDP, 06/03/2024

⁴⁵ IOM, 30/04/2024

⁴⁶ FES 19/04/2024

⁴⁷ GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

⁴⁸ UNCDR 01/02/2024

livelihoods.⁴⁹ Many ethnic South Sudanese "returnees" from Sudan were born in Sudan and have no kinship connections in host communities, leaving them displaced without a social network or capacity to deal with this displacement.

Individuals on the move encounter numerous checkpoints where they risk extortion by officials, including state actors and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). These checkpoints have increased with the rise in returnees, particularly on key highways for trade and humanitarian efforts, exposing people to extortion and looting. Economic downturns, inflation, corruption, and revenue diversion (e.g., oil revenue) has led to unpaid civil servants and officials, increasing extortion, theft, and looting of humanitarian aid. Armed groups, soldiers, and armed community youth restrict movement by extorting money on roads, such as from Juba to Yei, Juba to Nimule, and Juba-Bor routes.⁵⁰ Checkpoints and roadblocks, often illegal, have become a major source of movement restrictions, with reports indicating the number of checkpoints has nearly doubled since 2011, and checkpoint taxes have increased by 300%.⁵¹

Refusal or inability to pay bribes at checkpoints often leads to unlawful arrest and detention, which can then result in severe punishments such as torture, violence, and sexual exploitation, particularly affecting the youth. Armed men extort money from drivers and abuse people, especially women, at these illegal roadblocks. Financial gain is the primary incentive behind these checkpoints.⁵² With the worsening economic situation and unpaid civil servants and soldiers, roadblocks are likely to continue proliferating despite government efforts to crack down on them.^{53 54} This restriction can prevent individuals from working in certain locations if they are not from the local community, leading to unemployment and a lack of basic services.

Government capacities show both strengths and weaknesses. Various institutions, including police forces, address security, and legal frameworks like the land act, are in place. The government has emergency preparedness plans for flooding and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) task forces. State-level coordination mechanisms for sharing security incidents exist, and peace agreements between state and NSAGs have been signed. However, the implementation of these frameworks and agreements is often lacking. The peace agreement with armed groups is not fully operational, and there are no effective Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for checkpoints. Unpaid soldiers lead to corruption and high unemployment among officials. Government registration processes for documents like passports and national IDs are centralized and prohibitively expensive, making them inaccessible to many. Data collection and information sharing are barely functional, and disarmament efforts do not adequately reintegrate former combatants into communities. Police patrols are limited, and under-resourced, and unofficial taxation contributes to corruption.

RISK 5

Child and Forced Family Separation

As of the end of 2023, the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+) recorded nearly 20,000 unaccompanied, separated, or missing children in South Sudan over the past nine years due to conflicts within the country and from neighboring Sudan.⁵⁵ This data highlights a broader issue of family separation nationwide, affecting children and other family members due to conflict, natural disasters, and cultural factors.

Returnees and other forcibly displaced persons from Sudan also face significant family separation during their journey, including vulnerable groups like women, the elderly, and people with disabilities finding themselves without family or community support in transit settlements.⁵⁶ Protection monitoring data from April and May 2024 indicate that 50% of key informants reported instances of family separation.

⁴⁹ REACH 25/09/2023 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/emergency-situation-overview-sudan-south-sudan-cross-border-displacement-june-2023-malakal-county-upper-nile-state-south-sudan>)

⁵⁰ FES, 04/2024

⁵¹ Global Bar, 15/12/2021

⁵² IPIS Research, 10/12/2021

⁵³ Eye Radio, 05/03/2024

⁵⁴ Radio Tamazuj, 16/04/2024

⁵⁵ Save the Children 18/10/2023

⁵⁶ GPC 29/03/2024

According to data from January to May, security and safety concerns were the primary contributors to family separation, followed by access to education and internal family disagreements.⁵⁷ Family separation is largely attributed to the ongoing conflict,⁵⁸ particularly in Greater Jonglei and along the South Sudan-Sudan border.⁵⁹

Family members, such as people with disabilities or the elderly, are sometimes left behind during displacement, facing neglect and exploitation as well as with child separation which can lead to trafficking, child labor, early marriage, school dropouts, and recruitment, affecting host communities, IDPs, and returnees⁶⁰.

In some cases, separation is seen as a coping mechanism during emergencies, such as displacement or food insecurity. Families may leave children with other caregivers or behind due to severe economic condition.⁶¹ UNICEF data shows that child protection actors report family separation as tightly linked to food insecurity⁶². Severe economic conditions can force families to leave children behind or make them unable to care for them⁶³.

Child abduction, practiced by groups including non-state armed groups, is prevalent in some communities, particularly in Jonglei⁶⁴, where children are taken to assist in household chores, cattle raising, intercommunal fighting or for future marriage purposes. Youths who seek to get married may resort to abduction of children when they cannot pay the bride price. Incidents of raiding other communities to abduct the children and sell them are often a practice among those communities.⁶⁵ Children in harmful environments, often due to separation, experience psychological distress affecting their development and well-being. Inadequate law enforcement, social and health services, and traditional norms exacerbate these issues. Additionally, South Sudan's weak civil registry system hampers efforts to trace family links and reunify separated families.⁶⁶

Gender inequality contributes to family separation when women lack ownership on housing land and property rights, especially after the death of a husband or male family member. This has led to most women and girls being forced to seek other places of residence especially if the relatives of the deceased husband are keen on inheriting the property for themselves. Forced marriage or domestic violence threats can drive girls to run away.⁶⁷ Early marriages exploit girls separated from their biological parents and living with host communities.⁶⁸ Women facing family separation, particularly from husbands, may lose income, face increased sexual exploitation risks, and resort to negative coping mechanisms. They have fewer livelihood opportunities than men and struggle to access financial resources for essentials, heightening their vulnerability to economic shocks.⁶⁹ Discriminatory norms in South Sudan prevent women from accessing land rights, affecting widows and separated or divorced women who often lack necessary documentation.⁷⁰

RESPONSE

PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION

From January to May 2024, members of the Protection Cluster and AoRs provided protection services to 505K individuals reaching 22% of its target for 2024. More information is available on the visit [SSD Protection Cluster 5W for 2024](#)

⁵⁷ GPC PMS dashboard last accessed 15/06/2024

⁵⁸ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

⁵⁹ PC, UNHCR 12/02/2024

⁶⁰ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

⁶¹ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

⁶² UNICEF 31/08/2023

⁶³ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

⁶⁴ UN Peacekeeping 23/01/2023

⁶⁵ Le Monde 13/04/2023

⁶⁶ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

⁶⁷ Joint Protection Analysis Workshop, 29-30 May 2024

⁶⁸ OHCHR 21/03/2022

⁶⁹ OHCHR 21/03/2022

⁷⁰ UNHCR 06/08/2023

Between January and 31 May 2024 the activities of the Mine Action AoR contributed to preventing injury and loss of life from explosive ordnance and enabled communities' safe access to 298 agricultural areas, 19 hospitals, 6 schools and 70 water sources. Through these activities including assessments and surveys in collaboration with the communities, the responses resulted in a total of over 3,300 pieces of explosive ordnance disposed of and over 6 million square meters of land released during the period. To date, over 12,000 refugees have settled on the land. Similarly, in May UNMAS completed a clearance task in collaboration with IOM, releasing land in Hai Masna and Khor Malang, WBEG, for an IDP reintegration site that is expected to receive over 1,500 households.

UNMAS works closely with other humanitarian partners, in a joint effort to resettle IDPs and Refugees supporting the establishment of transit and resettlement sites for displaced populations. During the reporting period, UNMAS assessed and cleared land near Aweil, WBEG, in support of UNHCR.

Mine Action AoR members also provided Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) to civilians across the country to enhance their knowledge of safe behavior and thereby prevent accidents caused by explosive ordnance, benefiting almost 200,000 beneficiaries in total (approx. 32,000 men, 38,000 women, 70,000 boys and 60,000 girls).

The Ministry of Land, Housing, and Urban Development, in collaboration with IGAD and humanitarian agencies, has been actively engaging Transitional National Legislative Assembly parliamentarians in in-depth knowledge-sharing workshops on the technical aspects of the draft National Land Policy. This effort has included five sessions between December 2023 and July 2024. The bill is scheduled to be tabled in parliament for deliberation in August. If the draft National Land policy is passed and fully implemented, it will pave way for the formulation of other laws such as Land Registration Act, Land survey Act, Succession act among others and amendment of the Land act (2009) that would then help in reducing the HLP protection risks.

The HLP AoR conducted an analysis of HLP issues based on existing evidence and resources applying technical guidelines and guidance on tenure security for HLP actors in South Sudan. The HLP AoR developed its strategy and advocacy on a comprehensive, system-wide and multi-sector effort to respond to HLP needs, violations and related protection risks facing affected populations as well as prevent and stop recurrences of HLP violations.

The key role Women Led and Women Rights Organisations (WLO/WRO) play, is changing the mindset of the local community on the role of women in coordination and leadership. Promoting and strengthening the capacities of WLO/WRO who are often frontline responders to GBV, increased during the reporting period the response capacity in hard to reach areas and supported the localization agenda.

ACCESS-RELATED CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

Armed actors continue to perpetrate violence against humanitarian personnel. Bureaucratic access impediments included incidents of illegal taxation, interference in staff recruitment procedures, cumbersome processes, and changing of regulations. **For four consecutive months, Upper Nile State experienced the highest number of incidents reported followed by Unity State, and Jonglei State, while humanitarian access incidents increased by 42%.**

The recent floods added another layer of difficulty accessing humanitarian assistance, as the displaced communities sought safe haven in hard-to-reach areas, resulting in the delay of humanitarian material and service provision.

In addition, **over 90% of the population in South Sudan do not have access to legal documentation.** This is because, although the Directorate of Civil Registry, Nationality, Passport, and Immigration has offices in all states and administrative areas, the production of Nationality Certificates and Passports is centralized in Juba. This has limited and restricted the right to movement of most people and hindered access to essential services. The Protection Cluster is an active member of the Access Working Group in South Sudan, reporting relevant incidents and advocating with the respective humanitarian counterparts on lifting any impediments for protection actors as well as access to protection services.

CRITICAL GAPS IN FUNDING AND POPULATION REACHED

As part of the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), the Protection Cluster in South Sudan identified 5.5 M people in need (PIN), and aimed to target 2.2 million people. From January to June 2024 protection cluster partners in South Sudan, including assistance provided within the context of the Sudan Crisis response, reached 801.670 people in need with community-based, life-saving, individual, and some outreach protection services. At the same time, cluster members delivered 523 various awareness-raising activities, strengthened, or developed 224 structures such as referral pathways and dispute resolution mechanisms, and trained 200 staff.

- **Child Protection** partners reached 0.17M out of 0.33M targeted people
- **Gender-Based Violence** partners reached 0.1M out of 0.5M targeted people
- **Housing, Land, and Property** reached 1.6K out of 200K targeted people
- **Mine Action** reached 15K out of 500K targeted people (HNRP only, 88K reached outside HNRP).
- **Protection** partners 0.36M out of 0.6M targeted people.

Financial requirements for 2024 to assist the targeted population amount to around USD 121.9 M. With less than a third so far available, the overall implementation of the Protection Cluster and its AoRs activities are seriously challenged, with HLP facing the most critical deprioritization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the period covered by this analysis, urgent action is required to reduce people’s exposure to the identified protection risks and their reliance on negative coping strategies.

RISK 1 Gender-Based Violence

DEVELOPMENT ACTORS, PEACE ACTORS AND GOVERNMENT

- Long-term engagement by the Ministry of Gender and social services to promote women and provide economic empowerment opportunities in areas with high GBV rates, such as Unity State and Yei County in Central Equatoria State. This will reduce threats caused by financial hardships, which are the main driver of GBV and lead to negative coping mechanisms, especially in urban areas.
- The criminal justice system and the judiciary should actively engage in criminalizing sexual violence, such as conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and rape, to increase survivors' capacity to report and access justice, hold perpetrators accountable, and alleviate impunity.
- In rural areas, the government should ensure strong collaboration between the formal and informal justice systems to enhance the quality of remedies rendered to justice seekers. This will also break the bias that customary courts may have towards women while trying to uphold the traditional norms of their lands.
- Humanitarian actors should ensure that depersonalized data regarding conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is shared with the Protection Cluster to provide accurate information, enabling other actors to understand the scale of the situation and take appropriate action.
- Systems need to be more flexible and time sensitive regarding the allocation of funds, particularly in emergency situations triggered by the ever-changing context of South Sudan, which has multiple drivers.

PROTECTION SECTOR AND PARTNERS

- Protection partners should ensure quality programming for GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response services to be executed in a timely manner. Additionally, they must ensure strong collaboration with local actors who are frontline responders within each community.
- Advocate with the government to promote gender equality and address power imbalances, which are among the main drivers of GBV in South Sudan.

RISK 2 Theft, Extortion, Forced Eviction, and Destruction of Personal Property

DEVELOPMENT ACTORS, PEACE ACTORS AND GOVERNMENT

- The South Sudan National Legislative Assembly needs to finalize and implement the National Land Policy 2023. This policy reforms the outdated South Sudan Land Act 2009, which does not adequately address the ongoing land disputes among the people of South Sudan.
- The expropriation of land by the government for public use should include compensation for the individuals who primarily own the land.
- In communities where cattle raiding is a cultural norm, peace actors and authorities should engage in dialogues to encourage the abandonment of this dangerous tradition.

PROTECTION SECTOR AND PARTNERS

- Mobile and multisectoral teams need to be established to rapidly assess and respond with lifesaving protection services for people experiencing forced internal displacement.
- Community-based mechanisms need to be maintained in areas of friction and to prevent and mitigate potential shocks.

RISK 3

Discrimination and Stigmatization, Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services and/or Humanitarian Access

DEVELOPMENT ACTORS, PEACE ACTORS AND GOVERNMENT

- The Directorate of Civil Registry, Nationality, Passport, and Immigration should enable state-level offices to issue civil documents in a timely and cost-efficient manner.
- A partnership between development actors and authorities to create livelihood and employment opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable, is highly encouraged. This approach helps mitigate the root causes of discrimination and corruption, particularly for people with special needs and other vulnerable groups such as returnees, GBV survivors, and people with disabilities.

PROTECTION SECTOR AND PARTNERS

- Multi-sector and cost-sharing approaches among partners can improve access to humanitarian services for those who face discrimination and stigma. Humanitarian actors should create wider referral networks for cash protection programs to better use available resources and reach more people.
- Protection needs to continue to be mainstreamed among partners to achieve increased sensitivity towards programming that includes people living with disabilities and the elderly.

RISK 4

Unlawful Impediments or Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Siege and Forced Displacement

DEVELOPMENT ACTORS, PEACE ACTORS AND GOVERNMENT

- The government should work towards removing illegal checkpoints that restrict freedom of movement, particularly those on the Juba–Yei, Juba–Nimule, and Juba–Bor roads in Central and Eastern Equatoria.
- To prevent inter-communal violence, revenge killings, and border disputes, peace actors and authorities should engage in community dialogues and support the implementation of conflict prevention plans in locations where recurring violence consistently contributes to forced displacement.
- Enhance early warning, mitigation, and response systems for natural disasters, such as flooding, in locations where they are anticipated to be most prevalent.

PROTECTION SECTOR AND PARTNERS

- Establish and support community-based protection networks to monitor and report protection risks and incidents, including those related to movement restrictions, checkpoints, and extortion through protection monitoring systems.

- Utilize data from protection monitoring to inform humanitarian programming, advocacy efforts and those involved with humanitarian access negotiations.

RISK 5 Child and forced family separation

DEVELOPMENT ACTORS, PEACE ACTORS AND GOVERNMENT

- Enhance prosecution mechanisms for child abduction perpetrators, particularly in communities where it is prevalent, such as Jonglei, where children are at high risk of abduction, trafficking, and slavery-like practices.
- Establish civil registry systems at the rural level to promote timely family tracing and reunification, thereby increasing the community's capacity to mitigate long-term forced family separations.
- Increase support for the establishment of specialized protective housing programs, such as safe houses for GBV victims, homes for vulnerable unsupported elderly people and people with disabilities, as well as housing programs for orphans and other at-risk children.

PROTECTION SECTOR AND PARTNERS

- Together with local and state-level authorities, increase the protection footprint with programs for family tracing and reunification, child case management, and specific programming aimed at eradicating early marriage and supporting GBV survivors.

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Methodology

In April 2024, the Protection Cluster in South Sudan organized sub-national workshops with state-level cluster coordination mechanisms to assess the severity of 15 Protection Risks at the county level. From March to May 2024, with support from GPC, UNHCR/ECHO, and DRC/DEEP the Protection Cluster and AoRs organized a series of training on PAF, data triangulation, reporting, protection risk monitoring, and protection analysis. At the end of the cycle, a two-day workshop was organized by DRC/DEEP experts and PC and AoR staff gathering experts from 30 protection partners in the country whereby top protection risks were analyzed through PAF lenses resulting in core inputs for this publication. Additional data and information featuring in this PAU were collected through the country’s Protection Monitoring system.

