



Daily life at the State Garden site for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Malakal, Upper Nile State. In May 2024, the UNS Government, with support from the international community, developed a Roadmap for Returnees and IDPs (2024-2026) to foster durable solution activities for displaced and affected communities [LINK](#).

SOUTH SUDAN

Protection Analysis Update

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals can significantly contribute to addressing the root causes of the top 5 Protection Risks in South Sudan

MARCH 2025

CONTEXT

VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE	SSD COUNTIES FEATURING HIGH PROTECTION RISKS	EXPOSED TO AT LEAST ONE OF THE TOP-FIVE PROTECTION RISKS	PROTECTION CLUSTER PIN FOR 2025	HNRP REQUIREMENTS
1,062	80%	9.18M	5.3M	\$81M

During the second half of 2024 and moving into 2025, cycles of inter-communal conflict continued, with violence, epidemics, and natural disasters imposing further severe human, social, and economic costs on South Sudan. Civilians continued to be subjected to various human rights violations, including maiming, abduction, rape, and destruction of their properties. Lives have been lost and the population displacements within and outside the country remained massive. Close to two million South Sudanese linger internally displaced, and about the same number are refugees in neighboring countries. Furthermore, close to one million refugees and returnees from Sudan continue to seek a safe and dignified solution to their plight.

The protection environment in South Sudan remained fragile, marked by challenges such as restricted access for humanitarian workers, limited services, and weak protection systems especially in remote areas and critical supply routes. The socio-cultural landscape was obscured by harmful gender norms and exclusionary practices that continue to disproportionately affect marginalized groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and other minority groups. Coupled with food insecurity, lack of livelihood, it is often leading to the prevalence of harmful coping mechanisms such as child marriage and child abductions¹. The ongoing military conflict in neighboring Sudan has added to the fragile environment and vulnerabilities of people in South Sudan, resulting in an influx of refugees and returnees, escalating the demand for protection services. Displaced individuals face heightened risks of violence, exploitation, human trafficking, forced labor, and recruitment into armed groups.

Political instability, reflected in leadership changes and the postponement of elections until December 2026, has intensified security concerns. Key government positions underwent significant shifts, including within the National Security Service, the presidential guard unit, and the state-owned oil company. Violent events, such as cattle raids on the Juba-Bor Road and clashes in various states, have disrupted daily life and supply chains. Criminal activity has risen, further destabilizing the region. Flooding, which has affected over 1.4 million people, especially in Jonglei and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states, has worsened the humanitarian crisis, displaced 375,000 individuals and rendered major supply routes impassable.

The South Sudanese economy remains highly unstable. With the continued devaluation of the South Sudanese Pound against the US dollar, inflation and economic uncertainty continued to exacerbate the cost of living. The government has struggled with oil production disruptions and despite the efforts to combat inflation, such as taking control of foreign exchange markets and diversifying mineral resources, these measures may take years to show results. Civil servant salaries remain unpaid, and unregulated fuel prices contribute to heightened insecurity and food shortages. Increased taxes and fees, alongside the proliferation of road checkpoints, are symptoms of the government's attempts to navigate financial difficulties. A growing share of the population lives in poverty and extreme poverty². This situation challenges the resilience, especially of agropastoral communities, where 70% of victims have been attributed to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups.³ 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 conflict displacement. Criminality, insecurity, and rising food costs continued to be compounded by logistical challenges, undermined the humanitarian response.

Despite these difficulties the Tumaini talks between the South Sudanese government and holdout opposition groups were resumed in November 2024⁴. However, violence continued, notably with cattle raids along key roads resulting in casualties and exacerbating

¹ Protection Risk Monitoring System in SSD /

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiMDg3NThiN2MtYzI4M4My00OTE0LThhNWwtNjIxN2NhZjQyMDI4IiwidCI6ImU1YzZM3OTgxLTy2NjQtNDEzNC04YTBlLTU1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh9>

² Republic of South Sudan - Poverty and Equity Assessment 2024, World Bank / <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/27def228-c301-4ecf-a179-eb9647198cce/content>

³ UNMISS Brief on violence affecting civilians (July - September 2024) / <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unmiss-brief-violence-affecting-civilians-july-september-2024>

⁴ The Tumaini Peace initiative talks launched on 9th May 2024 were adjourned for the third time on 7th February 2025.

tensions. Additionally, the influx of returnees and refugees, which reached over 886,000 by November, placed immense pressure on the country’s already strained humanitarian systems. Cholera outbreaks, particularly in Renk County, Upper Nile State, Aweil East, Rubkona and Jamjang, where fragile health systems and population movements exacerbate the impact and spread of cholera and strained the health infrastructure, with over 16,000 reported cases and 325 deaths by the end of 2024⁵.

The combination of political instability, humanitarian challenges, and economic uncertainty perpetuate the fragile protection environment in South Sudan. The need for comprehensive protection strategies, economic diversification, and effective governance remains urgent as the country faces escalating violence, displacement, and an ongoing humanitarian 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 identified.

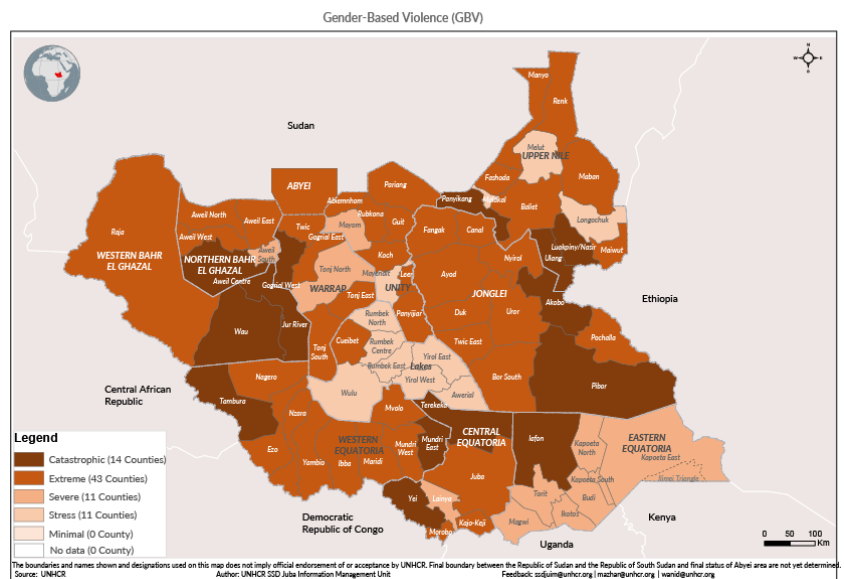
During the Protection Risk Assessment conducted in the second quarter of 2024 in South Sudan⁶, four counties were identified as having minimal protection risk, 12 counties were under protection stress, and 43 counties were experiencing severe protection risks. Alarmingly, **16 counties** were found to be in a state of **extreme protection risk**, while four additional counties were assessed as **overall catastrophic**.

In consultation with development partners, the outcomes of the discussions focused on addressing the root causes of displacement and aligning the sustainable development goals as core parts of durable solutions to end displacement, bring peace and stability and economic prosperity. Moreover, the linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals, development and humanitarian response are critical in ensuring the long-term solutions and not only short-term relief. Consideration of these components in addressing the protection risks and root-causes makes a solid transition from emergency to resilience-building and sustainable development⁷.

RISK 1

Gender-Based Violence

Since the introduction of PRMS in 2022, gender-based violence (GBV) remains the most critical protection concerns in South Sudan. The scale of vulnerabilities is spread across the widest spectrum across society and includes people with particular vulnerabilities, among which are the returnees, IDPs, women, girls, and children. This protection risk is deeply rooted in traditional structures, practices, societal and tribal inequalities, economic degradation, and weak rule of law and governance, and accentuated by the negative effects of climate change. The impact spreads across the communities, undermining the peaceful cohesion and fueling the violence rooted in economic, cultural, and environmental origins.



⁵ https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/cholera_dashboard/

⁶ 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.

⁷ Humanitarian SDGs: Interlinking the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the Agenda for Humanity, 2019 / <https://www.un.org/fr/file/71396/download?token=8h-pniVt>

Threats and Contributing Factors

The root causes of GBV are deeply embedded in cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances. These norms contribute to patriarchal structures that often position men as superior, thereby increasing the likelihood of violence. Lasting economic decay perpetuates poverty and insecurity, heightening tensions within gender relations and leading to increased instances of sexual and physical abuse. Physical violence is the most reported type of GBV accounting for 32% followed by sexual violence (rape and sexual assault) constituting 29% of all reported incidents of GBV in South Sudan (2024 GBVIMS).



Furthermore, inter/intra-communal violence linked to border disputes, cross-border violence, cyclical and retaliatory attacks, as well as ethnic polarization remained the primary source of subnational violence, accounting for 83% of survivors of gender-based violence. The weak rule of law and inadequate access to justice further enable harmful practices, diminishing accountability for perpetrators. Concurrently, seasonal floods as a consequence of climate shocks, contribute to the displacement of communities, further exposing vulnerable populations to GBV-related risks.

Finally, limited access to education and information perpetuates some of the cultural narratives that undermines women's roles, while overcrowding inside the IDP camps and settlements further exaggerates the environment for gender-based violence. Long-distance travel for women and girls, driven by essential family responsibilities on fetching firewood and/or water outside of inhabited areas, exposes them to heightened risks of attacks, rape, and other physical abuses, particularly in areas lacking sufficient resources and social infrastructure.

Main Consequences

The main effects of the GBV in South Sudan are profound and far-reaching, impacting individuals and communities alike. Survivors often experience severe psychological trauma, which can lead to emotional distress and, in extreme cases, suicide. The physical consequences are equally alarming, with many suffering from injuries and sexually transmitted diseases. Teenage pregnancy rates are alarmingly high, estimated at 30% among girls age between 15-19 years⁸, further complicating the lives of young women. Social stigma surrounding GBV exacerbates the issue, causing individuals to isolate themselves and marginalize from the community. Furthermore, the fear of physical abuse and violence leads many women to avoid certain areas, with many reporting they steer clear of places like latrines, markets, distribution points, schools, and firewood gathering locations due to safety concerns. This avoidance resulted in school dropouts and limited access to education, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage. Tragically, the consequences of GBV can also culminate in death, underscoring the urgent need for intervention and support.

Affected Population

According to the data collected through the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), an overwhelming 99% of survivors reported are women and girls. The demographics of these survivors reflect a diverse population, with 65% being residents, 16% internally displaced persons (IDPs), 10% returnees, and 9% refugees. Notably, children make up 28% of the survivors, predominantly adolescent girls, marking an increase from 23% in the previous year, 2023.

Capacity Considerations

In urban settings, women and girls frequently turn to detrimental coping strategies to earn a living, which stands in stark contrast to rural areas where alternative means of livelihood, such as fishing and agriculture, are more accessible. In rural settings, dependence on livestock for income can also exacerbate instances of GBV especially when girls are regarded as a source of income and can be exchange for cattle. Additionally, girls are often regarded as part of the extended family rather than solely as members of the immediate family, leading to a wider familial involvement in matters that impact them, including the economic advantages associated with dowries. However, reporting incidents of violence may provoke life-threatening reprisals against both survivors and their families. It is noteworthy that 54% of survivors accessed services through self-referral, while 20% were referred by police and other community members, and only 4% received referrals from health service providers.

⁸ UNFPA South Sudan / <https://southsudan.unfpa.org/en/topics/adolescent-sexual-reproductivehealth%23::~:~:text=Sexual%2520Reproductive%2520Health%2520The%2520adolescent%2520reproductive%2520health%2520status%2520in%2520the%2520country%2520is%2520poor,aged%252010%2520D34%2520>

Recommended interventions (Short Term)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Short Term Actions
<p>SDG 5: Gender Equality – aiming for behavioral change to cultural norms is critical for achieving gender equity and balanced relationships.</p> <p>SDG 4: Quality Education – through elimination of gender disparities in access to education will significantly contribute to gender balance and equalizing the parities within society.</p>	<p>Advocacy & Awareness: Develop and employ community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, facilitate dialogue and peace advocacy, raise awareness on women’s rights, foster social cohesion and peaceful co-existence with the affected population through regular dialogue and exchange of information.</p>
<p>SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth – Economic empowerment programs can significantly reduce gender-based violence and contribute to a better societal gender balance.</p> <p>SDG 10: Reduced Inequality – Protection interventions should address inequalities in the roles and societal structures influenced by traditional practices.</p>	<p>Livelihood Programs: Expand involvement and engagement of women and children in income-generating activities in agriculture to reduce gender-based dependencies, call for more focus and investment into agriculture as a core and foundational economic activity rooted in cultural practices. In addition, water provision, and alternative sources of energy for cooking will significantly contribute to reduced movement in unprotected areas outside of the community and exposure to the risks.</p>
<p>SDG 13: Improving education and awareness on climate change and shocks among the communities. Environmental stressors contribute to forced displacement, destruction of social fabric exacerbating GBV protection risks.</p>	<p>Infrastructure Improvement: For camp- or camp-like settings, the issues of congestion must be adequately addressed by communities as they often lead to crime, theft and GBV incidents, in constructive ways and planning and presented to the relevant authorities as visionary community solutions to address and resolve protection challenges.</p>
<p>SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal frameworks is essential for reducing and preventing gender-based violence.</p>	<p>Legal & Social Protection: Establish the local or community systems to hold the perpetrators accountable, call for improvement and increase of the frequency of court sittings for GBV-related cases, establish mobile courts to improve access to justice, strengthen reporting mechanisms, and enhance para-legal support networks. Increase legal aid for survivors and address barriers to accessing medical and psychological support (e.g., lack of access to Form 8 in police stations prevents survivors from accessing needed health and legal services).</p>

Recommended interventions (Strategic)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Long-Term Strategies
<p>SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth – Economic empowerment programs can significantly reduce gender-based violence and contribute to a better societal gender balance.</p>	<p>Economic Development: Government must assume its primary role in ensuring the equal participation of men and women in economic development through economic empowerment and equality of access to opportunities, economic empowerment programs must be aimed at eradicating of poverty and food insecurity in the country, thus feeding to the gender parity, balance and equalization.</p>
<p>SDG 4: Quality Education – through elimination of gender disparities in access to education will significantly contribute to gender balance and equalizing the parities within society.</p>	<p>Access to Education: Enforcing laws at the state level to encourage and improve access to education for women and girls through the introduction of mandatory education regulations.</p>
<p>SDG 5: Gender Equality – revising and changing the cultural norms is critical for achieving gender equity and balanced relationships.</p> <p>SDG 10: Reduced Inequality – Protection interventions should address inequalities in the roles and societal structures influenced by traditional practices.</p>	<p>Community-Based Protection: Work with traditional leaders, educators, and civil society to promote long-term social change and ensure local ownership of protection efforts.</p>
<p>SDG 13: Improving education and awareness on climate change and shocks among the communities. Environmental stressors contribute to forced displacement, destruction of social fabric exacerbating GBV protection risks.</p>	<p>Infrastructure Development: Invest and develop essential infrastructure in urban and rural areas with mindful approaches and planning, to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions while maintaining the surrounding environment. Develop contingency planning, for the times of crisis with focus on protecting and providing services to vulnerable persons such as women and children as well as preventing GBV-related incidents.</p>

SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal frameworks is essential for reducing and preventing gender-based violence.

Legal & Policy Reforms: Establish good governance through the goodwill of the central government, strengthen prosecution mechanisms, enforce the execution of laws, and enhance accountability to ensure perpetrators are held responsible.

Data & Evidence Collection and Analysis: Improve monitoring and reporting systems, ensuring accurate data collection on GBV cases and abuses to inform targeted interventions and monitor impact towards the reduction of the protection risk and increase in the achievement of the SDG goals.

Advocacy and Coordination Priorities

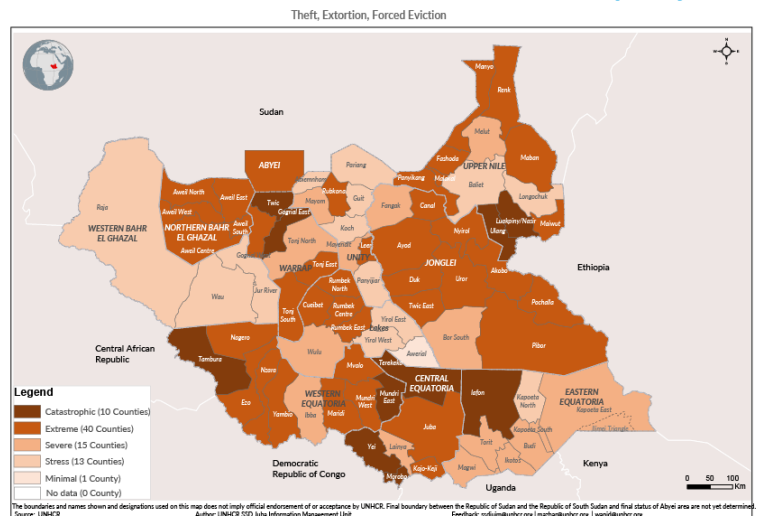
To effectively address the challenges faced by communities, it is essential for the government, (whenever applicable) humanitarian and development actors to mobilize local leaders, educators, and faith-based organizations to challenge harmful traditional practices and promote behavioural change through protective measures. Strengthening the rule of law and ensuring accountability requires action from state authorities, which includes enhancing law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, as well as supported by humanitarian protection actors, establishing community-based reporting mechanisms with strict confidentiality measures. Additionally, the deployment of police by the government as well as community-based initiatives for the creation of community-based enforcement mechanisms such as community patrols, watch checks, and warden systems can significantly contribute to safety. Furthermore, advocating for the attraction of development actors and increased investment in social infrastructure and essential services, particularly in rural and displacement-affected areas, is crucial. Presenting community, region, and state development plans designed with the contribution of local communities to authorities and development actors can help illustrate the positive impacts and investment costs associated with these initiatives. Close and regular collaboration between community leaders and government representatives at various levels is essential for effective advocacy. This can be facilitated through the development of various communication tools such as petitions, community bulletins, flyers, complaint boxes, fact sheets, informational posters, and culturally relevant awareness materials. Additionally, fostering community meetings, public presentations, community visits, lectures, and roundtable discussions can enhance engagement and dialogue. The implementation of community-based radio and media campaigns will further spread awareness and inform the public. Collaborating with religious structures, leaders, local and social media influencers, and traditional leaders is also crucial in promoting behavioral change within the community.

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

Widespread protection risks of theft, extortion, illegal land occupation, forced evictions, and lack of documentation often related to gender norms are linked to uncertainty and insecurity related to Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights. Such an environment inevitably leads to and causes displacement and exploitation of the most vulnerable and exposed groups of populations, particularly women and children. This is exacerbated by the weak legal frameworks and limited access to dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Threats and Contributing Factors

Poor land governance and lack of land tenure security are exacerbated by political instability and communal disputes, which often lead to violence and property destruction. The high cost of living driven by unemployment and inflation fosters economic insecurity, pushing individuals towards theft and unauthorized land occupation. Informal land settlements and forced eviction cases are reported in states such as Central Equatoria, Western Bahr El Ghazal, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei. The weak rule of law and insufficient enforcement of protective legislation create an environment where negative practices thrive, reducing accountability and enabling impunity for perpetrators.



Main Consequences

The challenges surrounding HLP rights have escalated significantly across the country, driven by illegal occupation, forced eviction, and land grabbing. Seasonal floods and drought, further displaced communities from their homes, with 42,314 reported cases seeking assistance over disputed agricultural and settlement land. Informal land settlements contribute to land disputes and forced evictions, while harmful customary practices related to land ownership disproportionately affect women, undermining their HLP rights. Cases of land tenure security records count over 150,000 of women and child headed households. Moreover, the fragility of dispute resolution mechanisms exacerbates the risk of community conflicts, as land grabbing and illegal occupation disrupt peaceful coexistence, fueling inter-communal strife and leading to renewed displacement. Continuous evictions contribute to secondary displacement, resulting in an increase in street children and beggars due to dire economic conditions. Women face particularly unequal opportunities due to their lack of land ownership, while civilians experience heightened criminality and extortion from organized groups. This situation perpetuates a cycle of revenge, including increasingly lethal cattle raiding, and raises the risk of GBV as a coping mechanism. According to the PRMS, in 2024, 56% of key informants indicated that the lack of title deeds has led to property grabbing, with 43% attributing homelessness to unlawful forced evictions.

Affected Population

IDPs, Returnees, Women and children, People with disability, other vulnerable groups, some host communities

Capacity Considerations

The failure to address HLP issues continues to hinder the achievement of durable solutions, particularly about shelter and livelihoods. The vulnerability of women to GBV exacerbates the violation of their HLP rights, while systemic corruption, impunity, and a lack of access to justice, coupled with economic downturns and unemployment, serve as common drivers of these challenges. While police structures exist for reporting crimes, the efficacy of these systems is variable, particularly in remote rural areas without efficient police presence, where youth groups often form community watch groups to monitor and report criminal activity. Additionally, land compensation is available for individuals affected by road construction, yet the allocation of land by community leaders or chiefs is often flawed, with many failing to provide proper titles, resulting in an inequitable system. Women's representation in decision-making committees remains minimal, with a ratio of one woman to ten men, and although women chiefs can play a role, their contributions often go unheard.

Recommended interventions (Short Term)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Short Term Actions
<p>SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal frameworks is essential for reducing and preventing HLP related crimes and disputes.</p> <p>SDG 10: Reduced Inequality – Protection interventions should address inequalities in the roles and societal structures influenced by traditional practices.</p>	<p>Advocacy & Awareness: Awareness raising among the affected populations on HLP and the negative consequences of using the unpopular practices of land ownership and possession. Apply community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, facilitate dialogue and peace advocacy, foster social cohesion and peaceful co-existence with the affected population through regular dialogue and exchange of information.</p>
<p>SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal frameworks is essential for reducing and preventing HLP related crimes and disputes.</p> <p>SDG 5: Gender Equality – revising and changing the cultural norms is critical for achieving gender equity and balanced relationships.</p> <p>SDG 10: Reduced Inequality – Protection interventions should address inequalities in the roles and societal structures influenced by traditional practices.</p>	<p>Capacity-building: Deploy the Capacity Building programs for the local authorities and community leaders on dispute resolution mechanisms and best practices for conflict settlement.</p> <p>Legal Protection & Justice: Establish local courts and conduct frequent visits to the fields through a mobile court system to stimulate the HLP rights observation and enjoyment. Strengthen community land committees that may provide temporary land tokens in expectation of the government land titles.</p>

Recommended interventions (Strategic)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Long-Term Strategies
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SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal frameworks is essential for reducing and preventing HLP related crimes and disputes.

Legal & Policy Reforms: Establish good governance through the goodwill of the central government, strengthen prosecution mechanisms, enforce the execution of laws, and improve the judicial system by establishing courts in all states. Improve land legal frameworks by working on policies that address specific land issues (e.g. IDPs and Returnees rights to land and women land ownership).

Infrastructure and Legal Architecture Development: Improve the Land demarcation (survey) system and develop a digital land registry.

Political: Formalization of the anti-corruption commission and ensure enforcement of it through relevant legislation and government rule.

Data & Evidence Collection and Analysis: Improve monitoring and reporting systems, ensuring accurate data collection on HLP cases and abuses to inform targeted interventions and monitor impact towards the reduction of the protection risk and increase in the achievement of the SDG goals.

Advocacy and Coordination Priorities

To effectively address land disputes and promote equitable land distribution, it is essential to mobilize communities and foster dialogue through the establishment of HLP community structures. Engaging local leaders, educators, and faith-based organizations will help challenge harmful practices while promoting protective measures that benefit the community. Additionally, it is crucial to call upon state authorities to strengthen law enforcement structures and the judiciary, as well as to enhance community-based reporting mechanisms that ensure accountability. By integrating HLP rights into humanitarian and development strategies, we can establish robust frameworks to resolve land disputes and promote justice within the community. Close and regular collaboration, dialogue, and advocacy between community leaders and government representatives at various levels are essential for promoting awareness of HLP rights. This involves the development of petitions, community bulletins, flyers, factsheets, informational posters, and other materials relevant to HLP awareness. Additionally, fostering community meetings, public presentations, community visits, lectures, roundtable discussions, and media campaigns serves to further spread awareness of HLP rights and practices within the community.

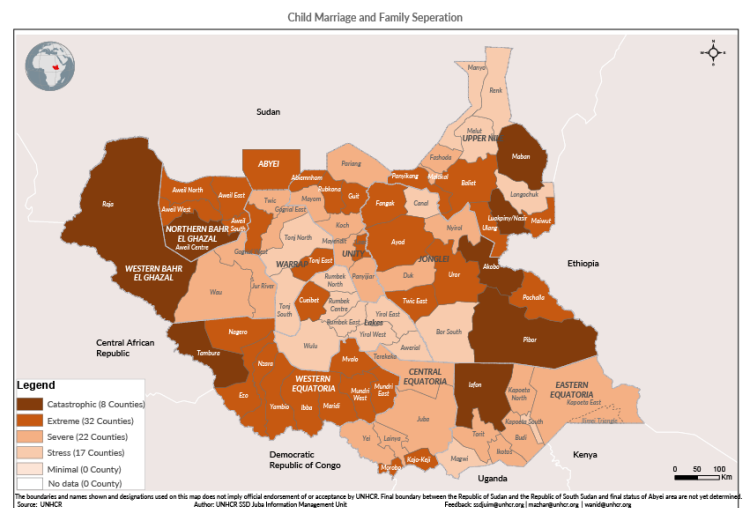
RISK 3

Child, Early or Forced Marriage as well as Forced Separations

Child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) and family separation risks remain critical protection concerns in South Sudan, particularly among vulnerable groups such as returnees, IDPs, women, girls, and children at risk of violence. These two risks are deeply rooted in structural inequalities, economic hardship, and weak enforcement of protective laws. The impact extends beyond individuals to entire communities, disrupting social cohesion and perpetuating cycles of poverty and violence.

Threats and Contributing Factors

The persistence of CEFM⁹ and family separation are driven by a complex interplay of factors, including conflict and displacement, economic hardship, social norms and practices, weak law enforcement, GBV¹⁰, and recruitment into armed groups. Armed conflicts often result in the breakdown of social structures, displacing families and increasing vulnerabilities, particularly for women and children. For instance, in areas like Tambura, the destruction of schools and community networks has



⁹ 'Born to be Married': Addressing child, early and forced marriage in Nyal, South Sudan, Oxfam-2019 / <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/born-to-be-married-addressing-child-early-and-forced-marriage-in-nyal-south-sud-620620/>

¹⁰ Condemning Child and Forced Marriages and the tragic deaths due to Forced and Child Marriage in South Sudan, UNFPA-2024 / <https://southsudan.unfpa.org/en/news/condemning-child-and-forced-marriages-and-tragic-deaths-due-forced-and-child-marriage-south>

directly correlated with an increase in forced marriages both there and in surrounding counties. Extreme poverty compels families to make tough decisions, such as marrying off daughters in exchange for dowries or sending children away for perceived better opportunities; recent reports indicate that over 500 children from Aweil East have been sent to a church in Juba in search of better education and living conditions. Additionally, harmful traditions, such as wife inheritance and cattle-based marriage transactions, reinforce gender inequality and limit women's autonomy. The limited implementation and enforcement of protective laws allow child marriage and family separation to persist with minimal accountability for perpetrators. Furthermore, the normalization of forced marriages is exacerbated by sexual violence, abduction, and exploitation, which often serve as coping strategies for survivors. Economic instability also increases the risk of boys being forcibly recruited into armed groups, further contributing to family separation.

Main Consequences

Child separation has led to severe consequences including trafficking, child labor, early marriage, school dropout, and the recruitment and use of children within host communities, IDPs, returnees, and instances of abduction. Older individuals face the risk of exploitation or even death in these precarious situations. Gender inequality exacerbates the plight of women, resulting in loss of income, sexual exploitation, and negative coping mechanisms, which can cause trauma and emotional distress, with severe cases potentially leading to suicide. The emotional toll on affected populations is profound, as unregistered children and adults struggle to prove their identities, complicating their ability to reunite with lost family members. Humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross and UN agencies, depend on proper documentation to assist in reconnecting separated families, yet the lack of a functional registry hampers these efforts.

Access to essential services, including education, healthcare, and legal rights, is often denied due to the absence of official documentation. Despite ongoing appeals for action, the rising trend of child abductions highlights the urgent need for stronger protective measures and heightened community awareness to safeguard vulnerable populations. In the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, authorities reported the rescue and return of nearly 30 abducted children to their families in 2024, but challenges remain, including a reluctance to arrest abductors swiftly for fear of jeopardizing the safe return of other kidnapped children.

Affected Population

Child, early, and forced marriage and family separation disproportionately affect multiple vulnerable groups, each facing unique risks. Women and girls, particularly in conflict-affected and displacement settings, are at increased risk due to gender power dynamics and economic dependence. Elderly individuals and persons with disabilities often lack adequate social support, making them vulnerable to forced caregiving arrangements or exploitation¹¹. Illiterate and impoverished groups face limited access to education and economic opportunities, which exacerbates their susceptibility to forced marriage. Orphans and children without parental care are at heightened risk of exploitation, trafficking, and forced labor. Adolescent boys¹² may experience family separation due to forced recruitment into armed groups or hazardous labor conditions stemming from poor economic situations or neglect from their families. Additionally, young women subjected to wife inheritance practices in some communities are coerced into marrying relatives of a deceased husband, further entrenching cycles of exploitation.

Capacity Considerations

The issues of child separation, including trafficking, child labor, early marriage, school dropout, and child recruitment, are severely impacting host communities, IDPs, and returnees, with abduction also being a significant concern. Older individuals are facing exploitation or even death, while gender inequality exacerbates the situation for women, leading to loss of income, sexual exploitation, and negative coping mechanisms that can result in trauma and emotional distress, sometimes culminating in suicide. In the second half of 2024, the PRMS recorded that 36% of key informants note children being the most affected by family separations and more than half in an environment of unsafety and insecurity. Abductions are accounted by 15% of KIIs as a form of family separation. Furthermore, 12% of KIs see the elderly and people with disabilities as being target groups. Unregistered children and

¹¹ Child Trafficking and armed conflict, United Nations – 2023 / <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Child-trafficking-and-armed-conflict-web.pdf>

¹² South Sudan's child soldiers: Stop the recruitment now, World vision – 2023 / <https://preprod.wvi.org/stories/south-sudan/south-sudans-child-soldiers-stop-recruitment-now> | Prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers tops the agenda at National Conference in South Sudan, UNMISS-2024 / <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/prevention-recruitment-child-soldiers-tops-agenda-national-conference-south-sudan>

adults struggle to prove their identities, complicating efforts to reunite with lost family members, as humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross and UN agencies depend on documentation to facilitate these reconnections. The absence of proper registries further denies access to vital services such as education, healthcare, and legal rights. Despite ongoing appeals for action, the rising trend of child abductions highlights the urgent need for stronger protective measures and community awareness to protect vulnerable populations. To address these issues, the South Sudanese government must strengthen the enforcement of existing laws, enhance community education, and provide economic support for vulnerable families, in collaboration with development organizations like UNICEF. Promoting localization by working with local leaders and grassroots organizations can help shift cultural norms and advocate for girls' rights to education and a healthier future. Operationalizing the National Strategic Action Plan (2017–2030) to end child marriage by 2030 is crucial, as ending such practices is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eradicate poverty and hunger, improve health and education, foster economic growth and justice, and reduce inequalities while promoting gender equality.

Recommended interventions (Short Term)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Short Term Actions
SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth – Economic empowerment programs can provide alternatives to forced marriage.	Advocacy & Awareness: Enhance and expand community-based awareness campaigns on the risks of CEFM, the benefits of education, and the importance of economic empowerment. Realizing that conventional ways of doing awareness raising has been limited, there is still a need to innovatively work with community leaders, religious figures, and media to shift harmful social norms.
SDG 3: Good Health & Well-being – Early marriage leads to higher rates of maternal mortality and poor health outcomes.	Legal & Social Protection: Establish mobile courts to improve access to justice, strengthen reporting mechanisms, and enhance para-legal support networks. Increase legal aid for survivors and address barriers to accessing medical and psychological support (e.g., lack of access Form 8 in police stations prevents survivors from accessing needed health and legal services).
SDG 4: Quality Education – Early marriage significantly reduces access to education for girls, perpetuating cycles of poverty.	Livelihood & Education Programs: Expand safe spaces for women and children, non-formal education to enable them to catch up with formal school, vocational training, and livelihood programs that reduce economic dependence on forced marriage.

Recommended interventions (Strategic)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Long-Term Strategies
SDG 3: Good Health & Well-being – Early marriage leads to higher rates of maternal mortality and poor health outcomes.	Legal & Policy Reforms: Align customary laws with the 2008 Child Act, strengthen prosecution mechanisms, and enhance accountability to ensure perpetrators are held responsible. Infrastructure Development: Invest in legal infrastructure such as courts and police stations, as well as educational and healthcare facilities to provide alternatives to early marriage and improve child protection services. Community-Based Protection: Work with traditional leaders, educators, and civil society to promote long-term social change and ensure local ownership of protection efforts.
SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal frameworks is essential for preventing forced marriage.	
SDG 5: Gender Equality – Addressing early marriage is critical for achieving gender equity.	
Data & Evidence Collection and Analysis: Improve monitoring and reporting systems, ensuring accurate data collection on Child Protection cases and abuses to inform targeted interventions and monitor impact towards the reduction of the protection risk and increase in the achievement of the SDG goals.	

Advocacy and Coordination Priorities

To effectively address community challenges, it is essential to mobilize local leaders, educators, and faith-based organizations to challenge harmful practices and promote protective measures. Strengthening the rule of law and accountability is equally important; this can be achieved by enhancing law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and community-based reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability. Additionally, advocating for increased investment in essential services, particularly in rural and displacement-affected areas, will help to build the necessary infrastructure and support systems for these communities. The initiative includes the development of fact sheets, informational posters, and culturally relevant awareness materials to effectively communicate important

messages to the community. To further spread awareness, community-based radio and media campaigns will be implemented, leveraging local platforms to reach a wider audience. Additionally, collaboration with local influencers and traditional leaders will play a crucial role in promoting behavioral change, ensuring that the messages resonate with the community and encourage positive actions.

RISK 4 Discrimination and Stigmatization, Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services, and/or Humanitarian Access

Discrimination, stigmatization, and denial of resources, opportunities, and services remain among the critical protection concerns in South Sudan. These risks are deeply rooted in structural inequalities, weak governance, and inter-communal conflicts. The impact of these issues is widespread, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations such as IDPs, returnees, people with disabilities (PWDs), women, and children. Systemic biases, corruption, and humanitarian access constraints further exacerbate these protection threats, hindering the ability of affected individuals to access essential services and support.

Threats and Contributing Factors

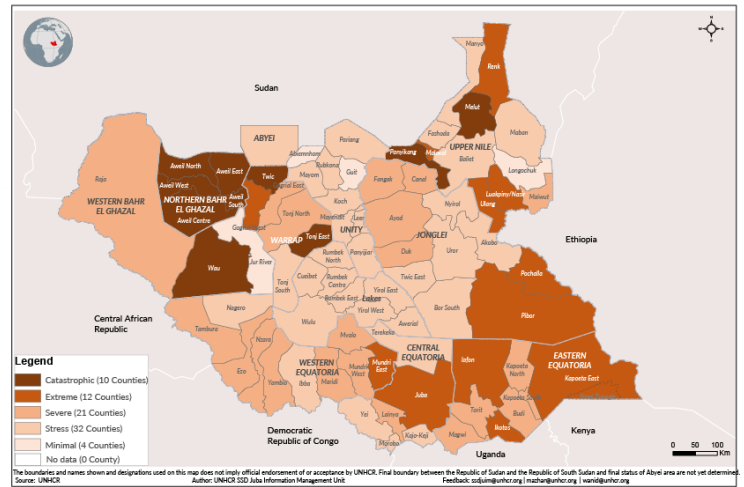
The situation in South Sudan is severely impacted by a weak rule of law and pervasive corruption, which undermine the enforcement of legal frameworks and perpetuate systemic discrimination, preventing affected individuals from seeking recourse. This corruption leads to the misallocation of aid, leaving the most vulnerable populations without the necessary resources. Economic and political exclusion further exacerbates the challenges faced by the country, as the fragile economy and ongoing political instability limit employment and educational opportunities, thereby reinforcing cycles of poverty that disproportionately affect women, children, and minority groups. Humanitarian access is severely restricted due to armed conflict, roadblocks, bureaucratic impediments, and targeted attacks on aid workers, resulting in affected populations being deprived of basic services such as healthcare, food, and shelter. Additionally, deep-rooted cultural and social norms, characterized by patriarchal structures, perpetuate inequality, with traditional practices such as forced marriage and denial of land rights further limiting the rights of women and marginalized groups. Infrastructure gaps, including poor road networks and inadequate service facilities like schools and hospitals, hinder access to essential services, particularly in rural areas where displaced populations and those in remote regions are disproportionately affected. Inter-communal conflicts, fueled by ethnic and tribal divisions, contribute to cycles of violence and exclusion, while discriminatory practices by community leaders and local authorities marginalize certain groups and prevent them from accessing resources and protection mechanisms. Lastly, a lack of awareness and misinformation about rights and available support services, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, exacerbates discrimination and stigmatization of vulnerable groups.

Main Consequences

Within the framework of PRMS, the highest proportion of key informants (65%) cited obstacles in access to food as the largest issue in accessing humanitarian aid followed by shelter/NFIs (64%), health (37%), WASH (34%), livelihood opportunities (29%), and education (27%). Key informants also cited school drop-out (53%), early marriage (49%), crime (47%), and alcohol/drug abuse as the most frequent negative coping strategies linked to the lack of access to humanitarian assistance.

Affected Population

In South Sudan, the ongoing conflict has led to significant displacement, with IDPs and returnees, PWDs, and the elderly being among the most affected groups, accounting for 36%, 35%, and 34% respectively. In 2024 alone, approximately 530,000 individuals fleeing the conflict in Sudan have sought refuge in South Sudan, bringing the total to over a million since mid-2023, with over 70% being South Sudanese nationals returning home. However, high levels of displacement exacerbate discrimination and stigmatization,



limiting access to livelihood opportunities and essential services for these vulnerable populations. Discriminatory social norms and physical barriers hinder PwDs from accessing humanitarian assistance, education, and employment opportunities.

Moreover, elderly individuals often face significant barriers to registration and aid access during displacement, leaving them behind in critical times. Women and girls are particularly at risk of GBV, early marriage, and exploitation, all linked to systemic discrimination and resource denial. Survivors of GBV face additional stigma that isolates them, making it challenging to seek justice and recovery support. Despite the pressing need for inclusive programming, there is a lack of information and research on the realities of PwDs in South Sudan, although protection actors continue to advocate for improved access to assistance for these individuals. Inter-communal conflict and seasonal insecurities further complicate the situation, affecting over 2 million internally displaced people seeking reintegration solutions and returnee communities striving for safety and dignity in their lives.

Capacity Considerations

The 2024 World Bank poverty assessment reveals alarming statistics, with 75.9 percent of the population living below the national poverty line of SSP358,724 annually, and 67.3 percent living in extreme poverty on less than SSP298,478 a year, which is the national food poverty line. This dire situation indicates a significant dependency on humanitarian aid among at least three-quarters of the population, further alienating the most vulnerable groups who often face stigma and obstacles to accessing necessary resources. To address these challenges, communities need support from stronger governance and development actors to improve current livelihood frameworks but also to diversify income and food opportunities for resilience.

Recommended interventions (Short Term)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Short Term Actions
SDG 5: Gender Equality – Reducing GBV and promoting equitable access to opportunities. SDG 10: Reduced Inequality – Addressing systemic discrimination and exclusion.	Awareness Campaigns: Launch community-wide campaigns using radio broadcasts, posters, and grassroots engagement to educate the public on the rights of marginalized groups and the services available to them.
SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal protections and governance frameworks.	Legal Support Services: Establish mobile legal aid clinics in high-risk areas to help individuals navigate legal obstacles related to discrimination and access to justice. Humanitarian Access Advocacy: Organize multi-stakeholder dialogues between government officials, humanitarian actors, and local communities to address access constraints and ensure aid reaches those most in need.

Recommended interventions (Strategic)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Long-Term Strategies
SDG 1: No Poverty – Ensuring equitable access to resources is crucial for poverty alleviation.	Legal and Policy Reforms: Work with government agencies and international partners to strengthen anti-discrimination laws, ensuring their enforcement and alignment with international human rights standards.
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being – Improving access to healthcare services for marginalized populations.	Infrastructure Development: Advocate for and support the development of essential infrastructure, including schools, healthcare facilities, and transportation networks, particularly in underserved and rural areas.
SDG 4: Quality Education – Eliminating barriers to education for vulnerable groups.	Economic Empowerment: Expand access to microfinance, entrepreneurship programs, and vocational training to increase employment opportunities for marginalized groups.
SDG 5: Gender Equality – Reducing GBV and promoting equitable access to opportunities.	Institutional Strengthening: Train judicial and law enforcement officers to improve their capacity to handle cases of discrimination, resource denial, and humanitarian access restrictions.
SDG 10: Reduced Inequality – Addressing systemic discrimination and exclusion.	Inclusive Social Policies: Support the integration of marginalized groups into national development plans by ensuring inclusive policy frameworks that prioritize equal opportunities.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – Strengthening legal protections and governance frameworks.

Strengthening Data Collection and Research: Improve data collection on discrimination and service denial trends to inform future protection strategies and ensure evidence-based decision-making.

Data & Evidence Collection and Analysis: Improve monitoring and reporting systems, ensuring accurate data collection on **Discrimination and Stigmatization, Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services, and/or Humanitarian Access** cases and abuses to inform future protection strategies and ensure evidence-based decision-making.

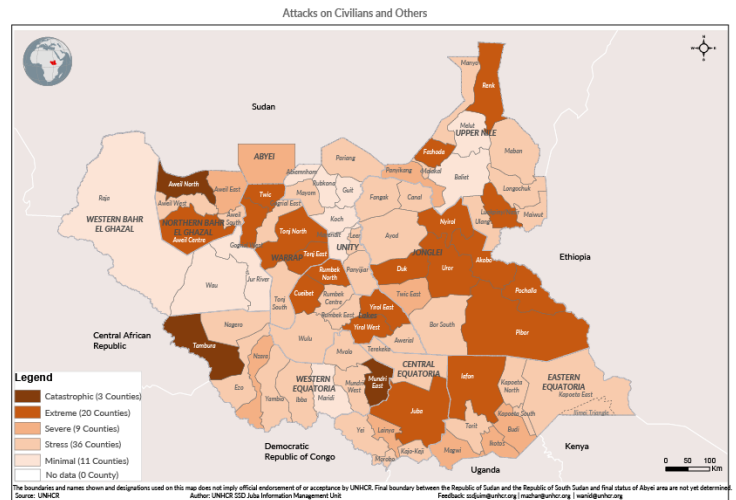
Advocacy and Coordination Priorities

To enhance government engagement, it is essential to organize regular policy dialogues with officials at both the national and state levels, aiming to address existing gaps in legislation and its implementation. In tandem, mobilizing international support is crucial; this involves securing funding from donors and international agencies to sustain protection programs that prioritize inclusive and equitable access to services. Establishing community-based protection initiatives will empower marginalized groups to advocate for their rights, fostering long-term social cohesion and accountability. Additionally, developing multilingual public awareness materials such as flyers, educational posters, and audiovisual content will highlight individual rights and available support services. Legal advocacy efforts should involve partnerships with legal experts and human rights organizations to challenge discriminatory policies and promote necessary legal reforms through strategic litigation. Facilitating community-led initiatives, including town hall meetings, storytelling sessions, and local advocacy campaigns, will ensure that affected communities are directly involved in shaping protection strategies. Furthermore, engaging the media by training journalists and social media influencers will help ensure responsible reporting on discrimination and humanitarian access issues, countering misinformation and fostering greater public awareness.

RISK 5

Attacks on Civilians and Other Unlawful Killings, and Attacks on Civilian Objects

South Sudan continued to witness alarming escalation of attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, deepening the humanitarian crisis in the country. Numerous incidents recorded, of unlawful killings, including extrajudicial executions and targeted killings of civilians, often perpetrated by armed groups and government forces. These attacks have resulted in widespread displacement, with thousands of people forced to flee their homes. Civilian objects, such as homes, schools, and hospitals, have also been deliberately destroyed or damaged, exacerbating the suffering of innocent civilians. One of the contributing factors to this violence is the ongoing issue of cattle raiding, which has led to a significant number of killings in rural areas, often fueled by ethnic tensions and competition for resources. The proliferation of arms in the country has only worsened the situation, making it easier for armed groups to carry out attacks on both civilians and civilian objects. The South Sudanese government introduced in July 2024 the amended National Security Service Bill which sparked concern both domestically and internationally. The bill sought to expand the powers of the National Security Service, allowing it to operate with greater authority and less oversight. Human rights advocates¹³ and the western diplomatic missions¹⁴ in the country argued that this could lead to further human rights violations, as the bill grants security forces sweeping powers of arrest, detention, and surveillance without sufficient judicial oversight. Amidst ongoing conflict and instability in South Sudan during the last quarter of 2024, the way for greater repression was paved and hindering overall efforts to protect civilians.



¹³ Security Bill set to become law by default: Lawyer, Radio Tamazuj-2024 / <https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/security-bill-set-to-become-law-by-default-lawyer>

¹⁴ Western embassies: Approval of security bill would be regrettable, Radio Tamazuj-2024 / <https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/western-embassies-approval-of-security-bill-would-be-regrettable>

Threats and Contributing Factors

The ongoing crisis in South Sudan is deeply rooted in several interrelated factors, including the absence of transitional justice measures, weak rule of law, and persistent impunity. The failure to implement the Revitalized Peace Agreement, compounded by ineffective justice institutions and a lack of unified security forces, has left the population vulnerable to ongoing insecurity and conflict. Additionally, the proliferation of small arms continues to pose a significant threat to development and peaceful coexistence among communities. Despite various disarmament initiatives, the presence of civilian arms has exacerbated inter-communal violence and rebellion against the government. The lack of political will to address past abuses, coupled with ongoing disagreements over key security arrangements, perpetuates a cycle of violence as clashes between government troops and local armed groups remain prevalent. Furthermore, the absence of a cohesive national vision among the leadership has resulted in gross human rights violations and deepened ethnic and tribal divisions, leading to increased displacement and fatalities. The socio-economic implications of these conflicts are dire, particularly for the youth, who face limited access to education, livelihoods, and basic infrastructure. With half of the population under 18, the psychological impact of war perpetuates a cycle of poverty, pushing idle youth towards negative coping mechanisms, including criminal activities. Climate change and extreme weather conditions have further complicated the situation, as communities are forced to migrate in search of resources, often leading to violent disputes over habitable land. Finally, the erosion of cultural and social norms due to prolonged conflict has weakened community structures that traditionally managed social problems, leaving a vacuum that has been filled by violence and weapon accessibility, particularly in cattle-related disputes.

Main Consequences

Widespread attacks against civilians continue to plague South Sudan, primarily fueled by subnational armed violence involving community-based militias and civil defense groups, as reported by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Between October to December 2024, the UNMISS Human Rights Division documented 233 incidents affecting at least 866 civilians, resulting in 352 deaths, 350 injuries, 129 abductions, and 35 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). A significant 13 percent in the number of victims was noted from the previous quarter (July-September). 77 percent of the total of victims were attributed to community-based militias and civil defense groups, with 18 percent linked to the parties in conflict and other armed groups. Inter-communal violence, particularly between the Azande and Balanda tribes in Tambura County, displaced 26,000 individuals due to resource control struggles. Additionally, cattle raiding and intercommunal conflicts in Urur, Duk Akobo West, and Gumuruk Counties in the Greater Jonglei area have been exacerbated by economic dependencies on cattle, leading to cycles of revenge. A similar pattern of violence and cattle raiding was observed in Greater Tonj of Warrap State, resulting in 20 deaths and an unspecified number of internal displacements, with access to affected areas being severely limited.

Affected Population

The UNMISS Human Rights Division (HRD) has established that men, particularly young men, constitute the majority of victims of violence, accounting for 79% of cases, followed by women at 11% and children at 10%. While men primarily suffer injuries (44%), killings (40%), and abductions (16%) during armed confrontations, it is crucial to recognize that women and children face disproportionate repercussions from conflict, especially regarding access to healthcare, education, and livelihoods in unstable regions. Women experience similar forms of violence, with injuries (35%) and killings (34%) prevalent, alongside conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) at 17% and abductions at 14%, particularly in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Warrap, and Western Equatoria States. Children are also gravely affected, with abduction being the leading harm (49%), followed by killings (23%), CRSV (18%), and injuries (10%). The impact extends to girls, with 15 victims of CRSV documented during the reporting period. The attacks on civilians often target vulnerable groups, inflicting harm on women and girls through gender-based violence (GBV), including early marriage and abductions. Additionally, children face the dual threat of abduction and recruitment into armed groups, with educational facilities frequently looted or destroyed. Furthermore, high levels of displacement among internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees exacerbate discrimination and stigmatization, limiting their access to essential services and livelihood opportunities.

Capacity Considerations

While returns from Sudan are the most cited displacement occurrences by Key Informants (especially in Unity, Upper Nile and Central Equatoria), almost an equal number of citations refer to internal displacement caused by floods and inter-communal conflict. Uprooted people seek shelter and most basic humanitarian and safety support often resorting to negative coping mechanisms for survival. Communal fighting also causes restriction of movement. Fear of death and injury and GBV violence are the most cited reasons for restriction of movement, negatively impacting livelihood, economic survival, reunification, education, etc. Community

dialogues for peaceful coexistence, traditional community support to the most vulnerable and community networks can restore links and assist in early recovery of affected people.

Recommended interventions (Short Term)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Short Term Actions
<p>SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – Strengthening the legal framework, ensure the functionality and independence of justice institutions, implementing the provisions of the revitalized peace agreement will drastically bring the nation towards a more peaceful and secure future.</p>	<p>Implement the provisions of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement on the unification and proper training of forces (art 2.2.9 and art. 2.2.10): Government-Despite efforts to unify the forces, with a key step of unification of command, in April 2022, the provisions are yet to be implemented. Fighting continues to flare up across the country claiming the lives of civilians, destroying civilian property and livelihoods, causing displacement perpetuating the cycle of violence and trauma for the communities. Therefore, all efforts by the government and opposition should be focused on the immediate cease fire and unification of forces. Proper training and orientation is necessary to defend the state, the people and its interests against external armed threats and avoid the escalation of fighting that could potentially lead once again to civil war.</p> <p>Implement the provisions of chapter V of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement on transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing : Government-Immediate establishment of a robust and independent justice system, ending impunity and cyclical violence and human rights violation.</p> <p>Launch well organized, well prepared and coordinated mass disarmament of civilians irrespective of their political, ethnic, tribal and/or religious affiliation.</p> <p>Roll out community-based programs for peaceful coexistence, peaceful conflict resolution and inclusivity: Implement relevant programs, broadcasting messages on radio and social media for unity as nation, beyond political, ethnic, tribal and/or religious background. Communities should be also sensitized to the short and long-term negative effects of war and violence. (this is both a short- and long-term solution). Addressing inherited, cultural and systemic discrimination and exclusion will assist peace building and reconciliation, increase equal access to resources and promote better standards of living.</p> <p>Integrate community-based patrolling, early warning mechanisms and peace building committees to support police efforts to reduce crime and armed attacks (this is both a short- and long-term solution)</p>
<p>SDG 4: Quality Education – Access to education and opportunities for development will increase the prospects of better standards of living and reduce resort to violence.</p> <p>SDG 5: Gender Equality – Promoting gender equality through behavioral change initiatives and women/girls’ empowerment programs will eventually reduce GBV and the harmful traditional practices perpetrated against women and girls, resulting from conflict, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians.</p>	<p>Strengthening Protection Mechanisms: Establish specialized training programs for law enforcement and judicial actors.</p>

Recommended interventions (Strategic)

Linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Long-Term Strategies
<p>SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – Strengthening the legal framework, ensure the functionality and independence of justice institutions, implementing the provisions of the revitalized peace agreement will drastically bring the nation towards a more peaceful and secure future.</p>	<p>Legal and Policy Reforms: Work with government agencies and international partners to strengthen the legal system and promote regular justice mechanisms, ensuring their enforcement and alignment with international human rights standards.</p>

SDG 4: Quality Education – Access to education and opportunities for development will increase the prospects of better standards of living and reduce resort to violence.

SDG 5: Gender Equality – Promoting gender equality through behavioral change initiatives and women/girls’ empowerment programs will eventually reduce GBV and the harmful traditional practices perpetrated against women and girls, resulting from conflict, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

SDG 4: Quality Education – Access to education and opportunities for development will increase the prospects of better standards of living and reduce resort to violence.

SDG 5: Gender Equality – Promoting gender equality through behavioral change initiatives and women/girls’ empowerment programs will eventually reduce GBV and the harmful traditional practices perpetrated against women and girls, resulting from conflict, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

Improve cultural and traditional norms: Provide long term capacity building programs to communities for behavioral change, including sensitization campaigns including through media for national unity, non-discrimination and inclusivity, non-violence, peaceful conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence, respect and promote gender equality as well as include environmental awareness, protection and preservation programs.

Community Engagement: Implement long-term sensitization programs targeting local leaders, faith-based organizations, and civil society actors to change discriminatory attitudes and ensure community ownership of protection efforts.

Data & Evidence Collection and Analysis: Improve monitoring and reporting systems, ensuring accurate data collection on **Attacks on Civilians and Other Unlawful Killings, and Attacks on Civilian Objects** and abuses to inform targeted interventions and monitor impact towards the reduction of the protection risk and increase in the achievement of the SDG goals.

Advocacy and Coordination Priorities

To enhance the effectiveness of protection programs, it is essential to engage with government officials through regular policy dialogues at both national and state levels, aimed at addressing gaps in legislation and implementation. Additionally, mobilizing funding from donors and international agencies will be crucial to sustaining these programs, with a particular focus on ensuring inclusive and equitable access to services. Furthermore, establishing grassroots initiatives will empower marginalized groups to advocate for their rights, thereby fostering long-term social cohesion and accountability within communities. To enhance public awareness and promote unity and peaceful coexistence, we will develop multilingual audiovisual content that highlights individual rights. In tandem with this effort, we will partner with legal experts and human rights organizations to challenge discriminatory policies and advocate for legal reforms through strategic litigation. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of community involvement, which is why we will facilitate town hall meetings, storytelling sessions, and local advocacy campaigns that empower affected communities to directly participate in shaping protection strategies.

Methodology - In December 2024, South Sudan Protection Cluster organized sub-national workshops with state-level cluster coordination mechanisms to assess the severity of 15 Protection Risks at the county level. In January 2025, the cluster developed a PAU workplan and agreed with AoR coordination mechanisms to focus the upcoming update on the linkages between top five protection risks and potential contributions of development and government stakeholders addressing the reduction of [top protection risks] root causes. In February 2025, the PC and its AoRs organized a PAU workshop gathering over 70 representatives of cluster partners working in South Sudan to identify key analytical contributions to the PAU.



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