

-BRIEFING NOTE-

UN Member State Virtual Briefing on the Humanitarian Situation in South Sudan

NGO Forum Brief | 6th May 2021

- SITUATION IN SOUTH SUDAN -

National and international NGOs in South Sudan are extremely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country. Despite progress in the R-ARCSS, humanitarian needs have continued to worsen across the country, impacted by persisting violence, a lack of basic services, recurrent flooding and economic decline. As the lean season and risk of further flooding starts, resources and support are needed *today* to prevent further humanitarian deterioration and loss of life.

Deteriorating humanitarian crisis

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan has deteriorated to a critical state. Today 8.3 million people, nearly 70% of the population, need humanitarian assistance with the worst food security situation since independence. 'Unprecedented' flooding has become 'precedented' flooding with a third year of flooding on the horizon leading to loss of lives and livelihoods and erosion of coping strategies. The severity of the situation must represent a watershed moment in the humanitarian response and be met with an urgent and significant scale up.

On the brink of famine

The food security and situation in South Sudan has reached levels not seen in years, exacerbated by conflict, flooding and economic issues. One in three people are food insecure, and 100,000 people are projected to be in 'catastrophic', IPC phase 5 conditions in 2021. 1.8 million women and children are acutely malnourished and the situation is continuing to worsen as the lean season is starting. A failure to provide resources, and a gendered response, to address both acute needs and address underlying causes will push South Sudan into famine.

Localisation and gender

South Sudanese organisations and staff are the primary responders across the country who stay and deliver time and again, yet their funding and inclusion at leadership levels of the response is limited and inconsistent. Women-led and women's rights organisations are disenfranchised and receive the least resources, but reach some of the most marginalised and at risk groups. A shift of power and sustained access to quality funding is needed to systemically strengthen and centre the voice of South Sudanese, and particularly South Sudanese women, in designing, driving and improving the response.

Funding & Coordination

A lack of funding and resources is critically affecting the ability of national and international organisations to respond to life-threatening conditions including WASH, protection and food security. Common pipelines are limited, food rations are being cut, logistics capacity is threatened, and NGOs are being forced to close programmes when they should be scaling up. A lack of additional funding will worsen the crisis and cause further loss of life. National and sub-national coordination, and emergency planning and prioritisation across the whole humanitarian system continue to experience significant challenges and a strategic stock-take of the overall response leadership is needed to ensure that resources are being used in the best possible way.

Humanitarian safety at threat

The safety and security of aid workers has seen a concerning deterioration. There was an alarming increase in aid workers attacked and killed, and aid supplies stolen, in 2020 with a worsening situation in recent months. In 2021, multiple direct attacks and threats against aid workers have already spiked and continue to be seen. A failure to ensure that humanitarians are protected will lead to unavoidable suspension or disruption of lifesaving operations in critically affected areas.

Civilian protection

Girls, boys, women and men continue to be directly affected by multiple protection threats and rights abuses across the country with violence disproportionately affecting women and girls. Sexual and gender-based violence and child protection issues remain endemic with significant impunity. As humanitarian conditions worsen, the impact is felt most by women, girls and boys with threats of sexual violence and early marriage, child labour, abduction and denial of education access.

Building resilience & development

Whilst humanitarian needs remain extremely concerning, in areas of stability across the country, opportunities must be seized to build social cohesion and consolidate peace efforts, build resilience, encourage sustainable recovery and harness future development opportunities to reduce aid dependency. A clear strategy for the response that works across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus, with long-term adaptable funding are needed.

Key asks on the humanitarian situation

- ASKS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH SUDAN -



Provision of basic services: The Government of South Sudan must prioritise the provision of basic services to the population of South Sudan including water and sanitation, healthcare, education, shelter, and livelihoods opportunities, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.



Safety and protection: The Government of South Sudan must ensure safety and security of both South Sudanese citizens and humanitarian workers providing services across the country. Any threats or attacks on aid workers must be dealt with swiftly and with full transparency. There must be urgent and robust accountability for sexual and gender-based violence in any form.

- ASKS OF THE UNITED NATIONS & NGOS -



A 'Peer 2 Peer' Review: Critical issues and gaps remain in the overall leadership and coordination of the response with some concerns continuing since the last *operational peer review*. An IASC led 'Peer 2 Peer' support mission to South Sudan should be considered as soon as possible to help all agencies collectively developing a renewed strategic approach for the humanitarian response.



Prioritisation of needs: The United Nations and NGOs must recognise the sharp deterioration in humanitarian needs across South Sudan and prioritise the provision of urgent resources, staffing and assistance to mitigate the impact on the most vulnerable South Sudanese populations in the country.



Strengthening the IASC coordination system: Global clusters must strengthen investment in South Sudan given the severity of the crisis, including the deployment of senior cluster coordinators and cluster resources at national and sub-national level. This will help strengthen cluster and inter-cluster planning and prioritisation, and timely delivery of humanitarian action.



A systemic shift in localisation and prioritisation of a gendered response: The role of local South Sudanese civil society, women-led and women's rights organisations must be recognised and supported given they are delivering a significant amount of response, often in some of the most insecure environments. Localisation must go beyond shifts in funding, and systemically strengthen the delivery capabilities, transferring decision making authority in the humanitarian system to local actors. It must include more funding for programming that advances gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG) across all sectors of the response, and the quality of that funding must improve so that it is flexible, predictable (multi-year) and covers both the direct and indirect costs of delivering aid across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

- ASKS OF THE INTERNATIONAL & DONOR COMMUNITY -



Increased resources: Resources and funding are urgently required to support the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. Additional funding is required for frontline humanitarian assistance, including basic logistics capacity, food and nutrition assistance, water and sanitation, protection and SGBV prevention and response, along with commitment to peacebuilding initiatives. Localisation and prioritisation of women led and women's rights organisations are critical in bilateral funding.



Commitment to maintain existing bilateral funding: Existing funding from bilateral donors must not be cut at a time when South Sudan lies on the brink of famine. Cuts to current funding levels, including by the Government of the United Kingdom, will cause irreparable harm and preventable loss of lives at a critical point in the humanitarian response, causing further social disruption.



Emergency, development and peacebuilding support: To avoid cycles of aid dependency, recovery, development and peacebuilding work must be invested in with long term commitments and adaptive programming. This must compliment and reinforce, but not replace front-line emergency services given the critically deteriorating needs.