

7. SOUTH SUDAN

Recovery from civil war at risk



KEY FACTS

Population: **11.2 million**

7.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid

7-8 million facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

2.6 million people internally displaced

2.2 million South Sudanese refugees

305,000 refugees hosted, mostly from Sudan

180th (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

163rd (of 167 countries) for women's equality

4/5 score for severity of access constraints

51% of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Ongoing conflict in South Sudan has forced thousands to flee their homes. Many have fled through the swamps to seek safety on "islands" where they live without access to food, clean water or healthcare. The IRC works in the areas surrounding Nyal to provide primary and reproductive healthcare and protection services to the locals and displaced South Sudanese.

PROBABILITY

7 HUMAN THREAT

4 NATURAL THREAT

IMPACT

10 CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

10 EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

South Sudan's high ranking on Watchlist is driven by widespread and complex humanitarian needs and a fragile peace deal that could unravel under the additional strain of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has arrived in South Sudan at a particularly delicate moment. A new unity government took office in early 2020 and faces the challenge of leading the country's recovery from large-scale civil conflict amid persistent localized conflict, economic crises and now an unprecedented pandemic. The COVID-19 outbreak is occurring in one of the world's weakest health systems and driving wider economic and food insecurity crises. The country is one of four countries at risk of famine.

"South Sudan is recovering from decades of conflict as a new government struggles to strengthen systems and help citizens rebuild their lives. Women and girls have faced one of the highest levels of violence around the globe and require a major increase in protection services. I am proud to work with the IRC to support survivors' physical and psychological wellbeing. The ability to work with people, whose smiles have been robbed, and give them hope and a reason to smile again is extremely rewarding."

- Elijah Gatchang
Women's Protection and Empowerment Manager,
IRC South Sudan



HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **The 2018 peace deal remains fragile going into 2021 and even if it holds, localized conflict will continue, with civilian populations and humanitarians caught in the middle.** The government signed an agreement with armed groups, particularly the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition, in 2018, contributing to reduced violence since. While the drop in conflict is a promising sign for 2021, there are still armed groups that reject the peace deal and so continue to fight the government. Tensions in the new unity government (formed in February 2020) could also worsen as COVID-19-induced economic downturns and drops in oil prices constrain the government's ability to implement the peace deal, whose implementation is already heavily delayed. In a worst-case scenario, a resumption of larger scale conflict could occur given the fragile nature of the peace deal.
- ▶ **Civilians and aid workers continue to face harm.** [ACLED](#) recorded over 500 fatalities in "violence against civilians" incidents in the first nine months of 2020, making South Sudan the tenth deadliest country for civilians in the world - though many incidents likely go unreported. Women and girls face particular risks; previous IRC research found that up to 65% of women and girls interviewed had experienced physical or sexual violence ([IRC](#)). South Sudan also had the second-highest number of attacks on aid workers in 2019 and topped the list in each of the previous five years ([AWSO](#)). Humanitarian access is "very highly constrained" according to [ACAPS](#), reflecting high levels of violence against aid workers, ongoing hostilities and restrictions on movement within the country and efforts by parties to the conflict to interfere with humanitarian assistance.
- ▶ **A perfect storm of crises - persistent conflict, desert locust swarms, an economic crisis, recurrent flooding and COVID-19 - is driving up food insecurity and increasing the risk of famine in 2021** ([WFP](#)). These factors leave populations displaced, crops destroyed and livelihoods lost, with flooding alone affecting over half the country's counties and 800,000 people in 2020 ([OCHA](#)). Since the arrival of COVID-19, the daily income spent on food has risen 27%, requiring 186% of income and making South Sudan the most expensive place in the world for food relative to average income ([WFP](#)). Much of the population cannot withstand these additional shocks. As a result, more than half of the population is currently facing acute food insecurity ([IPC Info](#)). Children are likely to suffer most, given that South Sudan already has one of the world's highest rates for child malnutrition.
- ▶ **COVID-19 threatens to exacerbate the country's health crises, given its extremely low coping capacity.** More than half of the population has no access to primary health services, which, alongside limited access to clean water, poor sanitation services and extremely low immunization rates, has left the population highly susceptible to diseases like COVID-19 ([OCHA](#)). In fact, NGOs provide 80% of the country's health services ([OCHA](#)). Before COVID-19, 44% of the population was at risk from diseases ([OCHA](#)) and 75% of child deaths were due to preventable diseases ([OCHA](#)). The pandemic is now stretching health services, while also derailing vaccination campaigns and other routine care. People may be deterred from seeking non-COVID care due to fear of infection and misinformation; IRC-supported clinics reported a 19% drop in patients for acute malnutrition despite growing food insecurity ([IRC](#)).

THE IRC IN SOUTH SUDAN

The IRC is one of the largest aid providers in South Sudan, operating there for over 30 years and delivering emergency assistance and supporting vulnerable populations in hard-to-reach areas. Our health response includes capacity building in state clinics, training of local health workers, nutrition programs, and sanitation services. We also provide support to survivors of sexual violence and child protection services. Community leaders and government officials are trained on the importance of upholding human rights. The IRC helps empower people through cash assistance, job and livelihoods training. Learn more about the [IRC's South Sudan response](#).



JUBA