

A photograph of two women in a rural setting, likely in South Sudan. They are standing behind a wooden table, preparing large, striped melons. The woman on the left is wearing a colorful patterned dress and a headscarf, while the woman on the right is wearing a purple shirt and a red skirt. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a rustic wooden structure with a thatched roof and a corrugated metal wall.

MEETING THE UNIQUE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

AN INTEGRATED EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN SOUTH SUDAN'S WARRAP STATE

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STATISTICS: Integrated Response for Crisis Affected People in Tonj, Warrap State

The following is a demonstration of the numbers of people who benefitted from various aspects of the Integrated Life-Saving Response for People Affected by Food Insecurity in Warrap State of South Sudan funded by the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF)



49,200 men and women

directly benefitted from the food and livelihoods element of the project. In this case, **14,709** participants were men, and **34,491** were women



40,308 people

received improved access to health services through the training of skilled community health workers, support to **13** health facilities and the provision of antenatal and postnatal care, deliveries, and immunisations for children



26 health workers

were trained in the clinical management of survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. These included registered midwives, child health workers, registered nurses and clinical officers



28 community health

workers were trained to administer vaccines



9,690 children

received assistance to fight Severe Acute Malnutrition and Moderate Acute Malnutrition. **4,824** and **4866** were boys and girls, respectively



4,084 children

children below age five received additional supplemental nutrition



19 nutrition sites

were established in Tonj, North, South and East Counties. In addition, **20** kitchen gardens and **30** mother-to-mother support groups were set up with the goal of boosting children's nutrition



9,628 lactating mothers

with Moderate Acute Malnutrition were also assisted.



321 separated children

were registered and helped with reunification with their caregivers. In addition, **107** community members have been trained in child protection procedures



665 community members

attended Child-Friendly Spaces, learned life skills and parenting tips, and received psychosocial support to cope with the various challenges brought on by the shocks of conflict, hunger, gender-based violence and displacement

How numbers were verified

Across all sectors of the project, World Vision verified achieved targets (figures or numbers) through registers, beneficiaries' cards issued, beneficiaries signing sheets, attendance lists, activity reports, monitoring and evaluation data, photos, observations, and beneficiaries' information management systems. These means of verification are undertaken by project staff, along with the project manager and verified by monitoring and evaluation staff assigned to a project.

Giving people of Warrap State a helping hand

For the past year, World Vision South Sudan has been actively helping Warrap State (Tonj North, South and East Counties) with the cumulative effects of years of conflicts – and its associated displacement, heavy flooding and hunger crises. In addition to these challenges, COVID-19 further exacerbates an already dire situation.

The Integrated Life-Saving Response for People Affected by Food Insecurity in Warrap State (South Sudan) Project engaged a multisectoral approach to life-saving interventions. The project had

critical strategic objectives. The first was to reduce threats to the health and life of the most vulnerable populations. Secondly, to ensure safe, equitable and dignified access to essential services in various spheres (education, water and sanitation, food and nutrition) to enable the targeted populations to meet their basic needs. Thirdly, and finally, to allow vulnerable people to recover from crises through expanding long-term solutions to the challenge of the displacement of persons while considering their rights as it builds resilience to future shocks and stresses.

To achieve set out objectives, the project specially addressed the following critical thematic concerns:

- a. **Education:** Conflict, floods, COVID-19, displacement, and hunger have had severe consequences for the education of children in Warrap State and grave implications for future generations.
- b. **Protection:** Conflict and the internal displacement of persons have disproportionately affected women and children in particular. In many cases, women face Gender-Based Violence in their homes, fleeing the violence and even at internally displaced person camps.
- c. **Non-food items:** In addition to emergency and humanitarian food provisions, non-food items such as cooking utensils and farm implements are often inaccessible or unaffordable and are required to effectively utilise food and seed donations.
- d. **Water, sanitation and health:** Besides food donations, ensuring access to adequate and safe drinking water and quality healthcare is vital.
- e. **Nutrition:** The shocks faced by the people of Warrap State have profoundly impacted the nutrition of infants, with women suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition and Moderate Acute Malnutrition. If not addressed at this point, it can lead to, at best long-term physiological and mental damage and, worst, death.

In many instances, each shock faced in Warrap State compounds the other. Conflict, especially between various armed groups, means that most people are forced to move away from their homes and farms. Those that remained or returned faced floods that significantly diminished or destroyed their yields. COVID-19's lengthy lockdowns,

however, crippled the economic prospects of non-farmers. The collective effects lead to a food shortage and result in hunger crises. Hunger, in turn, creates a general state of insecurity, discouraging internally displaced persons from returning and further depressing agricultural and economic activity and investments.

The project had to cover significant risks and challenges to achieve set targets. These include:

- a) **Inter-communal fighting:** continued fighting prevents distribution of provisions, finding suitable locations for peace meetings, and giving targeted participants freedom in the project's activities.
- b) **Seasonal flooding:** prevented project activities from taking place, accessing specific locations, or prevented project participants from accessing activities and services.
- c) **Accessibility:** particular targeted locations are already in hard-to-reach areas, notwithstanding conflict, floods or health restrictions
- d) **Displaced persons:** reaching or providing services is challenging, especially regarding education and agriculture.
- e) **Community buy-in:** there is difficulty in securing community participation if they are displaced, facing violence or insecurity. Participation and access are tricky if the community or governmental authorities endorse a project.

Despite all the challenges and risks involved, World Vision South Sudan met – and in some cases exceeded - project target numbers. A total of 149,446 participants and recipients received a wide range of goods, services, and training. In some specific cases, targets were

passed by more than 200 per cent. The original target for beneficiaries was set at 117,244. In all most call cases, women received more assistance than men in the same intervention category. See our achievements on page 3.

Understanding the context: A worsening crisis

“The conflict took us by surprise. We fled quickly, but the only thing I was able to take with us was my savings from the sale of my harvested farm products. I was with my two children and we followed people for four hours until we got to Warrap town,” remembers 30-year-old Ayom.

Ayom, a widow and mother of three, left her village in South Sudan’s Tonj North County in December 2021 due to communal clashes caused by cattle raids. She adds, “Even after my husband died in 2018, my children were always well-fed because we planted enough food from our farm.”

Unfortunately, her 7-months old son Manyiel developed a swelling on his neck. She further shares, “The money I planned for our fresh start was spent for Manyiel’s treatment. For three months now, my children and I have been sleeping in an open dwelling because we cannot afford to build a proper place to live.”

Ayom believes that the cold weather caused the swelling and other afflictions Manyiel experienced at night and malnutrition because she does not have enough milk to feed him. She laments the situation is a far cry from what they enjoyed before they were displaced.

Ayom felt helpless watching her son lose weight. Manyiel was confirmed to have severe acute malnutrition after mother and son were referred to World Vision’s nutrition centre in Warrap Primary Health Care Center by the women in the community.

“I have no idea that the solution to my child’s recovery was at the centre, which was close by, and services are free,” Ayom says.

The South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF) supports the nutrition centre to support women and children suffering from severe and moderate acute malnutrition.

Martin Mayiep, World Vision’s community nutrition worker, shares, “There is a considerable increase in cases of malnutrition now compared to past years. We used to receive about 10 cases a week, but now there are over 10 in a day, or at least 70 cases a week. This is due to food insecurity resulting from communal conflict, driving people to leave their homes and farms.”

Attending the clinic allowed Manyiel to start to recover from the worst of malnutrition. He was provided emergency nutrient-rich food supplements designed to address malnutrition.

“My son regained his appetite and actively consumed ready-to-use therapeutic food. I believe he will recover soon based on the experiences of other mothers and their children at the facility,” Ayom says.

Hailu Badhane, World Vision’s Warrap Zonal Program Manager, further explains the context.

“The ongoing clashes in Greater Tonj County of Warrap State have displaced thousands of families, disrupted their livelihood, and driven them to food insecurity and diseases. Children, breastfeeding mothers, and pregnant women are the most affected.”

“There is a great need for long-term intervention through peace-building and resilience development while at the same time scaling up the emergency response efforts to alleviate the suffering of the affected families,” Badhane adds.





Hunger and age-old traditions fuel more gender-based violence and child marriages

"I never noticed the man sneak behind me. He suddenly just grabbed me and raped me while I was trying to feed my siblings," 16-year-old Katina recalls.

When Katina and her siblings were young, their father left them, he was a soldier; their mother struggled with addiction. At 10, Katina was left to take care of her four siblings. To earn a living, she went into the bush regularly to gather firewood and sold it at the market. "We were able to have one meal per day," she explains. In January 2022, Katina was raped while foraging for firewood alone.

Survivors of rape require more than medical attention. Social workers equipped to address emotional and mental well-being in a trauma-informed manner are essential. World Vision staff, with support from South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF), trains people within the community to participate in referral pathway committees. These committees identify and refer gender-based violence (GBV) cases to health facilities and centres to provide trauma support to victims.

When one of the committee members learned of Katina's case, she was connected to Pasquina Diu, a social worker with World Vision. The next day, Pasquina immediately followed up and referred Katina to a hospital for medical services within the recommended 72-hour window. Katina received a post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kit for HIV prevention.

Two weeks following the rape, Katina faced another challenge. Her uncle, a brother of her father's, surfaced and told her that she would be married as she now brought shame to the family. "As if I asked the man to violate me sexually," she says.

An age-old tradition in many of South Sudan's communities gives uncles or older male relatives in the family, in the absence of parents, to decide on a girl's future without her consent. Her uncle forced her to marry a 45-year-old man as his fourth wife.

The UN identifies "climate shocks, severe drought, massive flooding and conflicts" as contributing factors to the increase in GBV cases, with an estimated 2.6 million people affected, 82 per cent of these being women and girls.¹

Katina worries for her siblings, who are about an hour away from them. "The situation is a lot worse now for them, but there is nothing I can do. I used the support I received from World Vision to provide for their food. I have nothing more to be able to help them."

World Vision campaigns within South Sudan communities continue to educate the population about child protection and gender-based violence. As hunger impacts millions in South Sudan, many vulnerable women and girls will be facing complex situations leading to abuse and will need more support.

¹Human Rights Council. (2022, March 1). Conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan: Conference room paper of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A_HRC_49_CRP_4.pdf



Community centres provide refuge for mothers

"As a widow, I find comfort at the women and girls' community centre, meeting other mothers, attending the counselling sessions, and going to the other learning activities. It gives me a sense of positivity and mental healing," shares Ayen Makoi Magar, a 26-year-old mother of three.

Ayen's husband is a casualty of the violence in Tonj South County, where communal conflicts are often triggered by cattle raids and floods.

"I was devastated when I lost my husband. He was our family's support and breadwinner," Ayen adds.

"The loss of my husband distressed me because I had nothing to support my children to survive," Ayen adds.

Ayen found support at a women and girls friendly space in Greater Tonj, where she gathered with other mothers who met regularly during training sessions on life skills activities, including embroidering bed sheets, baking bread, making beads, and filleting hair, among others.

"The activities at the centre give us hope to start our lives afresh. It enabled me to gather some courage to start working in a salon and learn how to embroider, which generates good income as people use the locally-made attires for traditional dances," she shares.

The mothers also received fabric wraps to protect their babies from a Gift-in-Kind (GIK) donation. In some parts of South Sudan, mothers use cow skin to carry their babies and use the cowhides as sleeping mats since they cannot afford both baby wraps and mattresses.

Adeng Dut, 17-year-old, a mother of one-month-old Achiek, shares, "I certainly feel that my baby is always comfortable and sleeps more which gives me enough time to do my house chores," she adds.

Another mother, Nyariau Dut, 28, a mother of five, says, "The cow skin was our only option as it was readily available although it exposed our children to sickness."

Nyariau adds, "The baby wrap is soft and fits in every season; that's important and perfect."

The South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF) Project aims to equip people with life skills to help them generate some income for microfinance saving and loaning activities.

Project Manager Joseph Deng says the 15,000 women and girls across greater Tonj North, South and East counties, all part of South Sudan's Warrap State, were targeted from training.

South Sudan's cattle keepers join dialogue to foster peace by ending cattle raids and theft

Cattle rustling and raiding have been among the causes of conflict in South Sudan's communities prompting even some UN agencies and other organisations to launch a robust campaign against the practice.

Through the support of the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF), World Vision conducted an inter-community peace conference in Tonj North County in Warrap State. It aimed to address the root causes of conflict among cattle keepers and find lasting solutions to this problem.

A total of 600 participants attended the conference representing the nine payams of Marial-Low, Rualbet, Akop, Alabek, Alek, Kirik, Awul, Pagol, and Manlor. A payam is the second-lowest administrative division in a county and has a minimum population of 25,000.

During the discussions, cattle camp leader Malook Garang Deng, 37, said that for peace to reign, the government should allow leaders to not only arrest cattle raiders but require them to return the stolen cattle to the rightful owners.

Before the event, 12 cows were stolen from Alek Payam, creating tension in the communities. After the conference, Malook returned the 12 cows. This came as a shock to all the participants because no such thing had happened before.

"I am happy with what Malook has done. I encourage him to continue with the good spirit and challenge all of you to do the same so that all our communities can live together in peace and harmony," said Tonj North Commissioner Hon. Kuol Akoon Mawien.

The commissioner appreciated World Vision's support and urged more support for dialogues. Maker Mabuoc, the paramount chief of Kirik Payam, also appreciated World Vision and the government for initiating the dialogue.

He said, "This will help us return to our homes and move freely from one payam to another. Let us stop revenge killing, cattle raiding, and looting of people's properties."

Chairperson Riak Madut Angok urged communities to embrace peace and live peacefully to allow humanitarian agencies like World Vision to deliver services to the vulnerable population.

"I advise the chiefs and cattle camp leaders to be brothers for peace so they can do farming and start small businesses. This will help put an end to the revenge killing, raiding of cattle and violence against girls and women," said the Minister of Local Government and Acting Governor Peter Paduol Manyong.

Kon Aguer Mawien, a community member of Warrap town, proposed that the dialogue should be done rotationally in communities to reach more people.

Project Manager Joseph Deng Deng added, "With support from the government and World Vision, the quest for peace can gain strength. It is timely to help address this issue and end the suffering of our people. It is vital for us to live peacefully."





Child-friendly spaces keep girls from early marriage

"Girls in the community marry early. The situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. I witnessed a young girl I know get married and it broke me. I often worried when my turn would come," shares 13-year-old Maria.

Through the **South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF)**,² World Vision constructed six child-friendly spaces (CFS) in Warrap State's Greater Tonj to enable vulnerable children to recover from crisis, seek solutions to displacement and build resilience against acute shocks and chronic stresses.

Maria recalls, "At first, my mother was not okay with me going to the child-friendly space, but I kept going and then shared what we learned from the activities. I became aware of issues affecting the protection and welfare of girls. My mother eventually allowed me to attend."

This project focuses on the prevention and protection risks like psychosocial distress due to conflict, child marriage or forced marriage, intimate partner violence and child neglect. Aligned with the 2020 South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan's objectives, it targets to address the risks faced by 55,000 people, especially children.³

"I am now fully aware of my rights as a girl and my fellow children. I also take time to educate my parents because keeping them aware will help stop them from marrying me off early," Maria says.

A **UNICEF report**⁴ reveals that in South Sudan, 52 per cent of females

under the age of 18 are married, depriving them of their basic rights and, for some, leading to their death.

"Child marriage is deeply rooted in gender inequality and harmful social norms. South Sudan is one of the countries with deeply entrenched cultural practices and social norms linked to gender. Child marriage is further fuelled by poverty," the report further states.

World Vision's Protection Officer Patricia Ajok finds it fulfilling to observe girls within the community freely open up on issues affecting them. "Unlike before, a girl goes through pain alone and keeps silent with the fear of being disowned by their families... Coming from this community, I can see the encouraging changes," she states.

On the date of this publication, the project had reached 10,104 people offering psychological support and counselling on distress.

"Aside from the learnings, we also get to meet new friends and participate in different games which promote peaceful coexistence. We are excited to have this centre. It is indeed a safe space for us," Maria adds.

Maria's friend, 10-year-old Charity, shares excitement about the activities. "Every day after school, I rush home to change clothes and then go to the CFS to meet my friends. Together, we do what we love most -- traditional dances and skipping jumps. It brings me joy and keeps me refreshed after school."

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). (n.d.) About the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund. <https://www.unocha.org/south-sudan/about-ss-hf>

² UNOCHA. (2021, March). South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-response-plan-2021-march-2021>

³ UNICEF. (2020, October 20). Some things are not fit for children – marriage is one of them. <https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/press-releases/some-things-are-not-fit-for-children>

Concluding remarks

Natural disasters and geopolitical conflict threaten children's rights and endanger the communities they live in. Women and children have been killed, maimed, abducted, exposed to rape and sexual violence, as well as recruited and used for different purposes by armed forces and groups due to civil unrest - forcing people to leave properties, resources, and livelihoods behind.

In 2022, an estimated 8.9 million people in South Sudan require humanitarian assistance. This population has distinct protection risks impacting over 3.5 million people, of whom 2.9 million are children and adolescents, including those with disabilities.⁵

A recent UN OCHA report⁶ raised awareness of the heightened risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation in this region and the increased need for critical child protection services. This is especially true in South Sudan's 65 counties, with increased conflict in over nine counties where World Vision has child protection in emergency operations. These counties are in Western Equatoria State's Yambio and Tambura counties, Warrap State's Tonj East, Tonj South, Tonj North, Gogrial West, Gogrial East and Twic counties, Central Equatoria State's Juba county, and Upper Nile State's Melut, Fashoda and Ulang counties.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this situation. HEA and Cash Assistance Manager Enid K. Ocaya says, "Disasters in South Sudan inevitably put affected populations at the risk of or suffering from violence, coercion and deprivation of basic goods and services. It is imperative that we [work to] prevent further harm to people."

Other forms of violence contributing to the unrest include: cattle raiding, revenge and targeted killing, ambushes, killing of children and women, burning of houses, looting of properties, rape, and gender-based violence.

Displaced persons are at higher risk of child neglect, child/forced marriages, and children coming into contact with the law are increasingly witnessed and reported. Our programming ensures the protection needs of children are met, with particular attention paid to the unique risks faced by adolescent girls. World Vision provides immediate verification and registration of the affected population, including identification, registration and case management.

Optimising resources and streamlining processes throughout the region is a crucial objective, taking the lessons learned from our humanitarian interventions across all sectors. This specialised approach captures nutrition, health, education, clean drinking water, hygiene and sanitation, food assistance, non-food items and livelihood programmes. Natural and man-made disasters in South Sudan inevitably places affected populations at the risk of suffering from violence, coercion and deprivation of basic goods and services.

The interventions support children who find themselves unaccompanied and separated from their families and caregivers, as well as individuals afflicted with mental health and psychosocial issues, to help reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by persons living with these conditions.

Child-friendly spaces are established to provide a safe space to seek help. Awareness campaigns are conducted regularly with children, local authorities, humanitarian agencies, parents and caregivers.

Thon Abraham Alier, a Protection Coordinator in Warrap State, emphasised that protection in emergency scenarios enhances children's well-being and helps promote child survival, ensuring their needs, good health, education, and their caregivers' economic growth and equity realised.

With over 30 years of experience working in South Sudan since 1989, World Vision's child protection in emergencies was enhanced with multisectoral programming to inform the leadership on decision making and influence policy, practice, and budgets.

Partnership with the affected South Sudanese communities is imperative for the empowerment of local groups to build capacity and engage with World Vision staff. Together we champion and influence culturally acceptable behaviour toward children and further promote child protection in emergency intervention programmes across the country.

⁵UNOCHA. (2022, May). South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot. <https://www.unocha.org/south-sudan>

⁶UNOCHA. (2022, May). South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot.



CONTACT

World Vision South Sudan

2nd Class, Hai Cinema
Juba, South Sudan
qa_southsudan@wvi.org

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