

History of South Sudan



On July 9, 2011, as an outcome of The Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended Africa's longest-running civil war, South Sudan voted to secede from Sudan and became the world's newest country. Independence occurred after more than two decades of near continuous war, during which nearly four million people were displaced, services and the economy were disrupted, and the South Sudanese people were under constant threat. Despite a short window of progress, the new republic continues to face many challenges, suffering from internal conflict since before its independence. Civil war broke out in 2013 when the president fell out with his then vice president.

The conflict began in December 2013 when soldiers loyal to President Salva Kiir, of the Dinka ethnic group and those loyal to former Vice President Riek Machar, of the Nuer ethnic group, fought in the capital following months of growing political tensions. A power sharing agreement, signed between the two parties in August 2015, did not end the fighting; following clashes in Juba in July 2016, Machar went into exile, where he remains. In December 2015, President Kiir dissolved South Sudan's 10 regional states and created 28 new states, fueling even more conflict in many areas. Both sides have committed abuses that qualify as war crimes, including looting, indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the destruction of civilian property, arbitrary arrests and detention, beatings and torture, enforced disappearances, rape including gang rape, and extrajudicial executions. Some abuses may also constitute crimes against humanity.

Lack of accountability continued to fuel the violence, while progress on establishing the hybrid court envisioned in the 2015 peace agreement was slow. The United States imposed sanctions on three government officials in September. UNICEF's attempts to broker peace between President Salva Kiir and former FVP Riek Machar in Khartoum culminated in agreement to a permanent ceasefire and the opening of humanitarian corridors, effective 30 June 2018. A permanent ceasefire requires more rigorous monitoring than a cessation of hostilities agreement, and it is unclear how it will be monitored and enforced. In August 2018, after five years of civil war, Mr Kiir signed a power-sharing agreement with rebel leader Machar and other opposition groups in a bid to end the brutal conflict.

In November of 2016, UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, said the ongoing violence had transformed the conflict into an “ethnic war” and warned of a “potential for genocide.” On February 20, 2017, famine was declared in South Sudan, deepening the humanitarian crisis in the region. Today, more than 2 million people have been displaced by violence in South Sudan. Of those fleeing the conflict, 87 percent are vulnerable women and children, who are in need of humanitarian aid.

Situation Overview



The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan has been unfolding since its independence, creating unprecedented levels of malnutrition, disease, gender-based violence and displacement.

Gender-based violence (GBV), in particular, is an urgent issue, with high levels of sexual violence prevalent throughout the country. **While GBV impacts all children, evidence certainly indicates that women and girls are most susceptible. Gender discrimination, norms and practices mean that adolescent girls are likely to experience certain forms of violence,**

such as sexual violence, at much higher rates than boys.¹ Innovative interventions are needed to help survivors of GBV, change cultural norms and mitigate the risks in all areas of humanitarian response.

Girls are more likely to be exposed to certain harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) – both of which are direct manifestations of gender inequality. Other examples of gender-based violence include but are not limited to: differential access to food and services, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual violence including rape, sexual harassment, dowry/bride price abuse, honour killing, domestic or intimate partner violence, deprivation of inheritance or property, and elder abuse.

These acts of violence are both an expression of and a way to reinforce male domination - not just over individual women and girls, but females in general. This violence is rooted in power imbalances and structural inequality between men and women. Globally, it is recognized that humanitarian crises exacerbate gender-based violence, not only creating severe health and psychosocial consequences for individual survivors – such as HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, and rejection from families and communities – but also undermining the overall resilience of societies, making it harder to recover and rebuild. In South Sudan, gender-based violence has been further fuelled by ongoing violence, impunity, a highly militarized society, and the destruction of services and support systems for survivors.

¹ Statistical Snapshot of Violence Against Adolescent Girls, October 2014

A number of UNICEF assessments and monitoring reports conducted in areas affected by the conflict reveal that gender-based violence, including sexual violence and rape, are a daily reality for many women and girls. Displaced women and girls are particularly exposed to exploitation due to their social and economic vulnerability, often resulting in the use of sex as a survival strategy to obtain food and other basic needs. Within these environments, overcrowding, poor lighting, and facilities that lack safety and privacy, pose protection risks and increase the likelihood of gender-based violence. Insufficient humanitarian aid in some areas force women and girls to leave relatively safe locations and walk through areas known to be high-risk for sexual violence in order to search for food, firewood and other basic necessities.



A police officer is assigned to stand guard to protect women who are at risk of being raped or killed as they collect firewood. © UNICEF/UNI44327/Nooran

In South Sudan, gender inequality, stemming from harmful social norms and unequal power relations, remains an impediment to women and girls' health, well-being and full enjoyment of human rights. A National Gender Policy was adopted in 2013, however conflict has stalled its implementation and women and girls continue to face violations of fundamental rights and remain under-represented in most spheres of influence. **According to a recent household survey, one out of five women in South Sudan are affected by gender-based violence and 79 percent of both male and female respondents find it justifiable for men to beat their wives or partners under some circumstances.**²

The implications of gender-based violence for the children of South Sudan are particularly acute. Their position in society makes it more difficult for them to access services, overcome security barriers, and advocate for themselves. Despite, obstacles to reporting, there is sufficient information available about gender-based violence perpetrated against children, particularly girls. However, most areas still lack basic services and emergency programs to support prevention and respond to survivors. Additional efforts are needed to expand child protection efforts in South Sudan, to protect girls and address the needs of all survivors of gender-based violence.

UNICEF in Action

UNICEF's objectives are to actively prevent children from being harmed; to monitor violations committed against them; and to develop programs to respond to instances where children are at risk of or have been subjected to violence, exploitation or abuse.

The scope and brutality of GBV during conflict and in the wake of natural disasters requires immediate action. **UNICEF works to protect women and children from all forms of GBV; provide survivors with holistic assistance; and generate lasting change to end GBV.**

² 2010 South Sudan Household Survey (SHHS)



In South Sudan, UNICEF uses a comprehensive approach to combat and address GBV. This approach includes legislative and policy reform and implementation, as well as the coordination of both gender-based violence prevention and response efforts that foster a protective environment for all women and children. UNICEF promotes the capacity building of health, social welfare, legal and security personnel to recognize and monitor GBV, while also providing survivors with appropriate care, support and protection services. On a local level, UNICEF supports community discussion, dialogue and mobilization to address norms of discrimination and change harmful behaviors to end GBV. UNICEF's

work aims to create safer communities for women and girls by transforming harmful social norms that contribute to sexual violence into social norms that uphold women and girls' equality, safety and dignity.³

Through this unique, innovative, and scalable approach, UNICEF South Sudan works to both prevent GBV, and provide support for survivors, engaging in activities such as rapid situation assessments and regular safety audits of vulnerable areas (such as camps for internally displaced persons) to inform prevention and response plans; supporting response services for survivors; training health workers to address critical gaps in the clinical management of rape; capacity building for civil society partners; promoting specific guidelines for GBV interventions to ensure there is adherence to national and international standards; and coordinating with partners (government and civil society) to promote ethical data collection, mobilize resources and improve international and national standards of care for survivors.

As of June 2018, UNICEF and partners reached 22,357 children (**10,592 girls**) through psychosocial support (PSS) activities in child-friendly spaces, schools and other community-based interventions in all 10 states. An additional 128 unaccompanied and separated children (**55 girls**; 73 boys) were registered in Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal states. UNICEF and partners reunified 78 children (**33 girls** and 45 boys). A total of 13,891 individuals (**3,528 girls**, 3,325 boys, **5,456 women**, 1,582 men) living in high-risk mine areas were reached with life-saving mine risk education messages in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states. In June, 17,231 people, including **9,308 women**, received life-saving child protection messaging, including on family separation, recruitment into armed groups and grave child rights violations.

An additional, 16,523 individuals (**8,653 women**, **3,636 girls**, 1,617 boys, and 2,617 men) were reached through gender based violence (GBV) prevention and response services, individualized case management support including PSS, clinical management of rape (CMR), referrals and community-based awareness raising on available GBV services. In addition, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare in South Sudan in the launch of strategic national plan for ending child marriage by 2030. Despite the progress that has been made, South Sudan is still in urgent need of support and funding to reach the thousands of women and girls that remain in danger, internally displaced and at risk.

³ https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/8_SSCO_GB_VN_February_2016.pdf

The Impact of Your Support

Dining for Women's support is instrumental in responding to the needs of vulnerable children, women and girls who have been affected by the humanitarian emergency in South Sudan. **An investment of \$100,000 from Dining for Women would support critical child protection efforts, including gender based violence prevention and response services, for approximately 2,640 women and children in South Sudan.** Dining for Women's generous support will be designated toward a pool of funds for the child protection response in South Sudan and will help UNICEF meet the following program targets in 2017:

- Provide 500,000 children and adolescents reached with critical child protection services (Dining for Women Support: 2,000)
- Reach 160,000 people with gender based violence prevention and response services (Dining for Women Support: 640)

The Way Forward

Gender-based violence is not only a violation of individual women's and girls' rights. The impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, and the fear generated by their actions, has an effect on all women and girls. It also has a global effect, stunting the contributions women and girls can make to international development, peace and progress.

In South Sudan, **UNICEF is responding to the urgent protection needs of women and girls, while also using strategies to create healthier, safer and more peaceful communities where women and girls are empowered to achieve their dreams and contribute to the development of their country.**

Protecting South Sudan's most vulnerable children from violence, exploitation and abuse requires a collaborative approach that draws on the participation of a range of national and international partners and supporters. With support from Dining for Women, UNICEF can respond to the survivors of GBV, while mitigating risks to protect women and girls today and in the future, ensuring strengthening child protection systems for lasting, sustainable change. We are grateful for DFW's partnership, as investing in this program, **thousands of girls in South Sudan will be given a second chance to grow in stable, nurturing and protective environments.**

