



for every child



# CHILD PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES: *UNICEF's Response to Gender-Based Violence in South Sudan*

**AN INTERIM REPORT PREPARED FOR DINING FOR WOMEN: 2019 PROGRAMMING**

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

## Program Summary

Just two years after becoming the world's newest country, civil war broke out in South Sudan. Since the conflict began in December 2013, the resulting crisis has uprooted more than 4.5 million people and led to over 60 percent of country's population facing acute food insecurity. Meanwhile, gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most critical threats to the protection and wellbeing of women and children, with studies indicating that some **65 percent of South Sudanese women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. One out of every four reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence involved a child.**

Gender-based violence is a pervasive human rights issue and a public health problem throughout South Sudan. While the law recognizes rape and other forms of sexual violence as crimes, enforcement of the law and justice for victims is challenging due to insufficient resources, a weak legal system, and ongoing conflict. This results in few survivors pursuing legal recourse and allows perpetrators of sexual violence to operate with greater impunity.

In South Sudan, UNICEF uses a comprehensive approach to combat and address gender-based violence. This approach includes advocating for policy reform and implementation, as well as the coordination of both gender-based violence prevention and response efforts that foster a safe and supportive environment for all women and children. UNICEF promotes the capacity building of health, social welfare, legal, and security personnel to recognize and monitor gender-based violence, 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.



A girl walking home from school in Juba's Lologo 2 area. Her family had been separated and is now reunited.  
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Following the September 2018 peace agreement, a reduction in armed hostilities helped lower the barriers to providing critical services to survivors of gender-based violence. This has allowed UNICEF to reach more of the most vulnerable women and children in South Sudan. In 2019, UNICEF's programming has been implemented in regions that were previously inaccessible due to armed conflict. **Your support played an important role in enabling UNICEF to meet the needs of vulnerable children, including girls and women, in South Sudan by working to protect them from gender-based violence, providing psychosocial support to survivors, establishing campaigns aimed at changing harmful social norms, and increasing their access to critical services.**

## The Impact of Your Support

Dining for Women's investment has been instrumental in enhancing the recovery and resiliency of women and girls affected by gender-based violence in South Sudan. With your support, UNICEF has succeeded in achieving the following results on behalf of South Sudanese women and girls:

### KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE FIRST 6 MONTHS OF 2019

- 11,339 girls and 10,128 women were reached with gender-based violence prevention.
- 45,094 girls accessed psychosocial support activities in child-friendly spaces and schools.

- 44,202 women received child protection messaging on prevention of family separation, recruitment into armed groups, and grave child rights violations.
- 271 unaccompanied and separated girls were registered for Family Tracing and Reunification services.

**UNICEF’s programs aimed at ending gender-based violence in South Sudan focus on the following four outcome areas:**

## **GBV RISK MITIGATION AND SUPPORT**

In South Sudan, UNICEF uses a multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence. This includes creating practical action plans at the local level to implement context specific gender-based violence mitigation interventions. **In the first half of 2019, UNICEF reached a total of 11,339 girls and 10,128 women with gender-based violence prevention programs**, including those focused on raising awareness and transforming social norms. During this period, scaling up gender-based violence risk mitigation across all of UNICEF’s Emergency programming in South Sudan was a main priority. Collaborating with other sectors, including Child Protection and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), culminated in an increase in access to safe sanitation facilities that are designed to provide additional privacy and safety to users.

UNICEF’s GBV program strategy also provided care and support for those who have experienced sexual or gender-based violence. In addition to specialized case management to help children overcome the trauma they have experienced, UNICEF offered skills building courses, access to women and girls friendly services, information about how to mitigate the risk of GBV, and referrals for other specialized services.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**

Cultural and age appropriate psychosocial support is crucial for supporting the recovery of child survivors of gender-based violence. **This year, UNICEF has already reached 45,094 girls with psychosocial support activities in child-friendly spaces and schools in ten regions throughout South Sudan.**

These spaces are allowing children to engage in stimulating sports and games inside safe and stable environments, further contributing to their overall wellbeing. The services, which include counselling and support, help children who have been affected by traumatic experiences such as gender-based violence or abuse to develop coping mechanisms and foster resiliency.



Children attending the Narrow Gate school hold stuffed toys they received. These small, simple pleasures help keep young minds healthy and alert so they can continue to learn at school, despite difficult conditions in the city.  
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## **AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**

**Gender inequality and harmful social norms remain impediments to women and girls’ health, wellbeing, and full enjoyment of human rights. To help address these underlying factors that contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence, UNICEF continues to engage with communities, faith-based organizations, and civil society groups to raise awareness about the risks of gender-based violence.** The goal is to facilitate a process to explore, debate, and ultimately alter social norms that influence individual behaviors, collective practices, and widely held beliefs that contribute to gender-based violence. UNICEF invites all members of the community to participate in these discussions, in recognition of the fact that shifting social norms requires support from men and boys, as well as the

collaboration of key local decision makers who are committed to making their communities healthier and safer for every child.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

UNICEF and its partners continued to work towards strengthening national capacity to provide quality gender-based violence risk mitigation and response services. In collaboration with its partners, UNICEF rolled out a trainers' manual for teachers and facilitators, targeting child protection and education personnel, as well as a step-by-step practical guide on the social reintegration of girls who have formerly been members of armed groups. The practical guide provided additional guidance and resources for local actors who are working to support girls, including those who have been affected by conflict related sexual violence.

In June, UNICEF worked alongside the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare to launch the Child Protection Information Management System+ (CPIMS+) and release the first ever case management handbook for case workers. CPIMS+ is an online database and application designed to help caseworkers update and monitor cases in real time, allowing them to better support unaccompanied and separated children, child survivors of sexual violence, and children associated with armed groups. Building South Sudanese capacity through training local personnel and providing appropriate resources is integral to ensuring that sustainable solutions to gender-based violence endure.

## The Way Forward

Dining for Women's commitment to providing survivors of gender-based violence with the lifesaving support they need is empowering vulnerable women and girls across South Sudan. Looking ahead, UNICEF hopes to continue its partnership with Dining for Women in order to build on the progress already made and continue working towards a day when every girl and woman can live free from the fear of gender-based violence.

Persistent conflict and instability in South Sudan continue to expose children to extreme suffering, violence, and hunger. Children living in areas of conflict are particularly vulnerable, requiring protection from the trauma and stress they face, as well as support for coping with the violence they witness. Additional efforts are required to expand child protection programs in South Sudan and address the needs of all survivors of gender-based violence. With your support, UNICEF is responding to the urgent protection needs of women and girls, addressing underlying drivers of gender-based violence, and implementing strategies aimed at creating healthier, safer, and more peaceful communities through South Sudan.



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**On behalf of children in South Sudan, thank you for your support!**

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