

Briefing Note – 5 April 2017

SOUTH SUDAN

Food Security and Nutrition



	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major
Need for international assistance					X
Expected impact	Very low	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major

Crisis overview

Famine was declared in Unity state in February 2017 after months of a deteriorating food security situation across South Sudan. An estimated 100,000 people are facing Famine (IPC Phase 5) food security outcomes in Unity state, and 4.9 million people are currently food insecure (IPC Phases 3 to 5) across South Sudan – an increase of 1.5 million since the beginning of 2016. The north of the country – where conflict was initially concentrated – has been the most affected by the severe food insecurity situation, but the situation in the south has rapidly deteriorated since fighting erupted in Juba in mid-2016, and spread to the Equatoria.

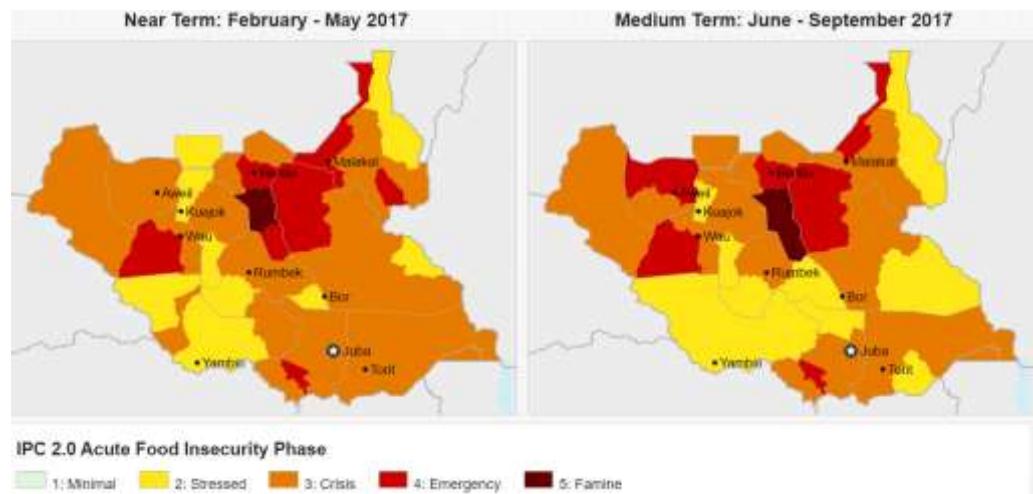
In January 2017, severe acute malnutrition countrywide was at 4%, double the emergency threshold, and global acute malnutrition 15.6%. The situation is particularly critical in the northwest and east, but nutrition rates have also deteriorated across the Equatoria since July 2016.

The severe food insecurity situation coupled with continued insecurity have caused tens of thousands of people to leave South Sudan for neighbouring countries over the last months. More than 50,000 people have arrived in Uganda since the beginning of March, while another 50,000 people have left for Sudan since the beginning of the year. The critical malnutrition situation is making people more vulnerable to the ongoing cholera outbreak, with almost 6,000 cases reported since the beginning of the outbreak in June 2016.

Limitations

Needs assessment of conflict-affected areas, such as Yei in Central Equatoria, are lacking.

Food security forecast February–September 2017



Source: FEWSNET 16/03/2017

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale Food insecurity is expected to escalate at the peak of the lean season, between May and August, with 5.5 million people food insecure – a further increase of 600,000 people. Unity, Central Equatoria, Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei and Upper Nile are of most concern, as Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes are expected to spread, and famine conditions are expected to further spread in Unity.

Priorities for humanitarian intervention **Food security:** Unity, Jonglei, Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Central and Eastern Equatoria are worst affected. **Nutrition:** 273,600 children are severely malnourished, particularly in the northwest and east.

Humanitarian constraints

- Insecurity and conflict restricts movement and aid delivery in northern and southern states particularly.
- Administrative and physical restrictions imposed by warring parties
- Poor state of the roads countrywide.

Crisis impact

4.9 million people – 41% of the population – are estimated to be food insecure between February and April 2017, 1.1 million more than in January 2016, and 100,000 face Famine (also reported in the IPC classification as Catastrophe) food security outcomes (IPC 20/02/2017). Crisis and Emergency food security outcomes are reported in Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal and in Unity due to violence, the economic crisis, and difficult access to affected populations. In the Equatoria, food insecurity has more than doubled since conflict escalated there, to more than one million food insecure, up from 400,000 between January and March 2016 (IPC 20/02/2017; IPC 12/2015). Food insecurity is driven by conflict and insecurity, disrupted trade and limited imports, high inflation rates and dysfunctional markets, as well as destroyed harvests and inability to plant for the next season.

Malnutrition has also deteriorated, with GAM and SAM levels at the WHO emergency thresholds. Malnutrition remains critical in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Unity, and has deteriorated in Central Equatoria. Food insecurity has resulted in displacement towards neighbouring countries in search of food, notably from Greater Bahr el Ghazal towards Sudan, and Eastern Equatoria towards Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda. 6.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan (OCHA 05/01/2017).

Displacement

The severe food insecurity situation coupled with insecurity has spurred displacement over recent months. Since the beginning of the year, 54,000 South Sudanese have arrived in Sudan, mainly from Northern Bahr el Ghazal, likely driven by the extremely low food access situation (FEWSNET 01/04/2017; 16/03/2017, Radio Tamazuj 19/03/2017). Since the beginning of March, another 54,000 South Sudanese have arrived in Uganda from the Equatoria, fleeing a volatile security situation and low food availability (FEWSNET 01/04/2017).

In February, there were also reports that people are fleeing Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria in search of food in Kenya and Ethiopia, but the drought affecting Kenya and insecurity on the Ethiopian border is limiting movement (UNICEF 15/02/2017).

People also go to UN PoC sites to receive food assistance. As of 23 March, there are 214,980 IDPs in UN PoC sites (UNMISS 27/03/2017). In Bentiu PoC site in Unity, as of 15 March, over half of the total number of entries are motivated by acquiring food assistance (IOM 15/03/2017).

Food

From February to April 2017, 4.9 million people are estimated to be food insecure (IPC Phases 3 to 5), more than 41% of the entire South Sudanese population, up from about 32% of the population in January. The total number of food insecure is expected to keep increasing to 5.5 million people at the height of the 2017 lean season in July (IPC 20/02/2017, FEWSNET 16/03/2017). The most affected areas are Unity, Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal, Central and Eastern Equatoria and the north of Jonglei.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION FOR FEBRUARY-APRIL 2017							
State	Mid-2017 Population (NBS)	Phase Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis	Phase 4 Emergency	Catastrophe	% of Crisis, Emergency & Humanitarian Catastrophe
Central Equatoria	1,398,316	475,000	385,000	495,000	45,000	-	38.6%
Eastern Equatoria	1,010,188	230,000	325,000	345,000	110,000	-	45.0%
Jonglei	1,822,086	205,000	645,000	755,000	220,000	-	53.5%
Lakes	1,113,716	320,000	450,000	355,000	100,000	-	40.9%
Northern Bahr el Ghazal	1,418,111	185,000	385,000	580,000	290,000	-	61.3%
Unity	1,124,916	140,000	390,000	420,000	170,000	100,000	61.3%
Upper Nile	1,258,323	495,000	470,000	270,000	60,000	-	26.2%
Warrap	1,448,812	385,000	665,000	210,000	65,000	-	19.0%
Western Bahr el Ghazal	545,565	85,000	200,000	235,000	10,000	-	44.9%
Western Equatoria	705,821	400,000	205,000	100,000	-	-	14.2%
Total	11,845,855	2,920,000	4,120,000	3,765,000	1,070,000	100,000	41.7%

Source: IPC 20/02/2017

Unity: 100,000 people face Famine food security outcomes between February and April 2017. Mayendit and Leer are in Famine, and Koch is at risk of famine (IPC 20/02/2017). Unity has been the scene of fighting since the civil war broke out in December 2013. 531,700 people are internally displaced and unable to return due to ongoing insecurity (OCHA 16/02/2017). Most markets are not functional in these three counties as of the beginning

of 2017. The market in Bentiu is functional and sells cereals, but prices are too high for most people: the price of sorghum (South Sudan's main staple) increased fivefold in Bentiu between 2014 and December 2016. It is four times above the five-year average (FEWSNET 16/03/2017). Livestock has dwindled due to repeated displacement, and food production is well below normal. In Leer, IDPs are living on islands, surviving on fish and waterlilies (Reuters 26/02/2017). They cannot access markets or move to look for food due to insecurity.

Western Bahr el Ghazal: Violence persists, although it is less intense than in 2016. Trade flows between Wau and Raja have been interrupted because of insecurity in Raja. They are also interrupted between Wau and Tambura in Western Equatoria. This is likely to affect food supplies on markets. Raja is heavily reliant on food imports from Sudan through Northern Bahr el Ghazal, but insecurity is likely impacting supplies. Cereal prices in Wau are extremely high: the price of sorghum in February 2017 was over 1,100% above the five-year average (FEWSNET 16/03/2017). In and around Wau, acute food shortages were reported among IDPs in mid-February. The large IDP population around Wau does not have access to humanitarian assistance (Radio Tamazuj 07/02/2017).

Northern Bahr el Ghazal: In January 2017, intercommunal clashes were reported around Aweil, as the dry season enabled greater freedom of movement. Fields were damaged and agricultural activities disrupted, limiting food availability (Radio Tamazuj 21/02/2017). Insecurity on the roads from Juba has severely disrupted trade. The closure of the Sudan–South Sudan border has also contributed to the disruption of local markets.

Central and Eastern Equatoria register Crisis and Emergency food insecurity since fighting escalated in July 2016, and the situation is expected to keep deteriorating. Violence increased again in Central Equatoria in February 2017, and insecurity restricts access to food. Dependence on wild foods has increased in Morobo and Lainya counties, notably for those displaced who are hiding in the bush or in rundown buildings in rural areas (FEWSNET 16/03/2017). In Lainya county, livelihoods were destroyed in February, with reports that government soldiers were stealing harvests and food stocks (FAO 21/02/2017). Trade flows are severely disrupted by violence, and road ambushes are regular, notably on the road from Kaya to Yei and Juba to Nimule, which are important trade routes. In Juba, in February 2017, staple food prices were two to four times those of February 2016 (FAO 21/02/2017).

The drought affecting the Horn of Africa has led to dire conditions in Eastern Equatoria. In Kapoeta county there are reports that people are dying from hunger while migrating to neighbouring countries in search of food (UNICEF 15/02/2017). This is compounded by

insecurity in counties that border Central Equatoria, such as Torit and Magwi. High food prices were reported mid-February, likely due to armed groups restricting access to Torit and Magwi town, and disrupted trade flows from Central Equatoria (Radio Tamazuj 17/02/2017).

Upper Nile and Jonglei: Security has deteriorated since fighting resumed in February, resulting in high levels of displacement, limited access to affected populations, and high levels of food insecurity. At the beginning of March, the 33,800 people displaced in Malakal and Melut, and the 33,000 people displaced around Nasir in Upper Nile, are in acute need of food and are living off wild foods (FEWSNET 16/03/2017, Radio Tamazuj 13/03/2017). Livestock were destroyed during the recent fighting, and market supplies are limited (OCHA 21/03/2017). In Jonglei, trade flows are disrupted by violence in northern parts of the state, and movement is restricted. This is notably the case in Ayod county, where severe food shortages were reported among the displaced population in March (Sudan Tribune 05/03/2017, Radio Tamazuj 14/03/2017). In Pibor county, 60,000 people were estimated to be facing food shortages at the beginning of February (Radio Tamazuj 07/02/2017).

Nutrition

As of the beginning of January 2017, SAM is at 4%, twice the emergency threshold, and GAM is at 15.6%, just above the emergency threshold (UNICEF 17/01/2017). High rates of malnutrition are reported countrywide, with an estimated one million children acutely malnourished, including more than 273,600 severely malnourished (OCHA 10/03/2017, OCHA 14/02/2017). 339,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are also estimated acutely malnourished (OCHA 14/02/2017).

The nutrition situation has deteriorated since 2015, notably since conflict resumed in July 2016. It is aggravated by health concerns, which make people more vulnerable to malnutrition, and deteriorating food security.

According to the latest IPC assessment from February 2017, GAM is above 15% in 14 of the 23 assessed counties (USAID 03/03/2017). The highest levels of malnutrition are reported in Unity and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, however, the nutrition situation has also significantly deteriorated in the Equatorias. In Unity, GAM has exceeded the 30% Famine threshold in Leer (32.4%), and is approaching the threshold in Mayendit (27.3%) (FEWSNET 16/03/2017). In Northern Bahr el Ghazal, an October 2016 assessment in Aweil East and Aweil Centre found GAM of 17.1% and 14.4%, respectively (FEWSNET 16/03/2017). In Western Equatoria, high GAM and SAM rates were reported in March 2017: GAM is 15.9% and SAM is 4.4%, both above the emergency levels (UNICEF 20/03/2017).

Health

Access to health facilities is limited in areas affected by conflict, as many have been damaged or destroyed and medicine shortages are reported. This contributes to the spread of diseases and high levels of malnutrition.

Malaria is the main cause of morbidity, and is aggravated by malnutrition. 1.9 million cases of malaria were reported between January and November 2016, slightly more than in the same period of 2015 ([USAID 02/12/2016](#)).

Measles cases also increased in 2016, with 13 outbreaks reported across the country, double the number recorded in 2015. 2,294 suspected measles cases were reported between January 2016 and January 2017, and 28 deaths (CFR 1.22%). Children under five are most affected ([WHO, Government of South Sudan 23/10/2016](#)). Since January 2017, the number of cases reported has been declining ([WHO, Government of South Sudan 19/02/2017](#))

Vulnerable groups affected

IDPs suffer from high levels of food insecurity. New and large-scale displacement has been reported in 2017 in Central Equatoria, Jonglei and Upper Nile due to fighting between government and opposition forces. Longer-term displacement persists in Unity and Western Bahr el Ghazal. Displaced people who are not sheltering in PoC sites or IDP camps are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity: they generally hide in the bush or in rundown buildings, and restricted movement hinders access to markets and food ([FEWSNET 16/03/2017, Reuters 26/02/2017](#)).

Poor households are particularly affected by both the economic crisis and the current conflict, and have exhausted coping mechanisms.

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Security and physical constraints

Access to affected populations and aid delivery has been severely challenged by the intensification of violence in several areas since the beginning of 2017. As of March 2017, insecurity is disrupting humanitarian operations in Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Central and Eastern Equatoria.

Roads are in a poor state in South Sudan. The only all-weather land access connecting South Sudan to the outside world is the road from Juba to Nimule in Central Equatoria, going through Eastern Equatoria. This is particularly concerning during the rainy season from August to October as large parts of South Sudan are inaccessible.

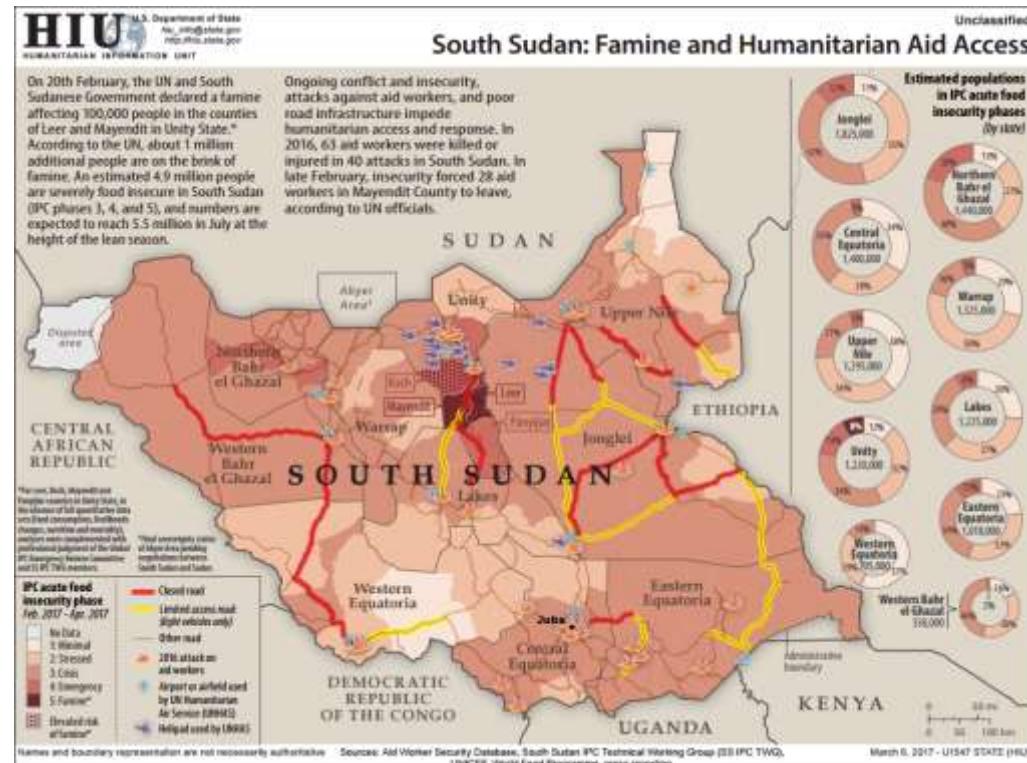
Access to affected populations

Aid workers have been directly targeted: in Unity, eight aid workers from Samaritan's Purse were abducted by opposition fighters on 13 March and then released, and two IOM aid workers were killed and three injured in an ambush on 14 March in Lakes ([The Star 16/03/2017, Reuters 13/03/2017](#)). There are reports of looting of humanitarian facilities.

Government forces and opposition fighters regularly set up road blocks or deny access to affected populations. In February, access was restricted to Yei and Lainya town in Central Equatoria and Wau Shilluk in Upper Nile ([OCHA 07/03/2017](#)). On 6 March, NGOs operating in famine-struck Mayendit county in Upper Nile were asked to leave by the government ahead of military operations ([Sudan Tribune 05/03/2017](#)).

Overall, aid delivery in South Sudan is becoming more difficult and this is likely to continue in the coming months. At the beginning of March, the South Sudanese government raised fees for foreigners to get a work permit from USD 100 to USD 10,000 ([Al Jazeera 09/03/2017](#)).

Food insecurity and humanitarian access, March 2017



Source: HIU 06/03/2017

Aggravating factors

Economic crisis

South Sudan's economy is highly dependent on oil: oil production accounts for 99% of South Sudan's exports, and over half of the country's GDP (ODI 10/2015). The drop in oil prices has severely affected the country's economy. The decline in oil revenues has been compounded by limited availability of foreign currency and a depreciating exchange rate. Inflation is extremely high, reaching 900% in February 2017 (UNICEF 15/02/2017).

South Sudan is highly dependent on food imports from Uganda, Kenya and Sudan. Despite a large agricultural sector, it is estimated that only 4% of the country's land is cultivated continuously due to conflict, limited infrastructure, farming techniques, and lack of government interest in developing the sector (Sudan Tribune 14/02/2017).

Conflict

The current conflict affects the economic situation, as well as people's availability to engage in income-generating activities. Livelihoods have been damaged and destroyed, with agricultural production halved as insecurity hampers agricultural activity.

Insecurity severely disrupts trade flows, limiting market integration. The road linking Juba to Nimule, in Central Equatoria, is the only all-weather road and is critical to South Sudan's trade with neighbouring countries. However, it is insecure, with attacks regularly reported, further limiting trade flows from Uganda.

Displacement

1.9 million people are internally displaced across South Sudan, and the number continues to increase (USAID 06/01/2017). The displaced population is unable to plant crops and harvest. Living conditions for displaced are poor, making people vulnerable to disease and malnutrition.

Cholera

Since the beginning of 2017, there has been a resurgence of cholera, and it has spread to more areas: cases have been reported in Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes, Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile and Unity. The outbreak started in July 2016, and 5,780 cases had been reported, including 143 deaths, as of 24 March (CFR 2.29%) (WHO 24.03.2017; WHO, PAHO 12/02/2017).

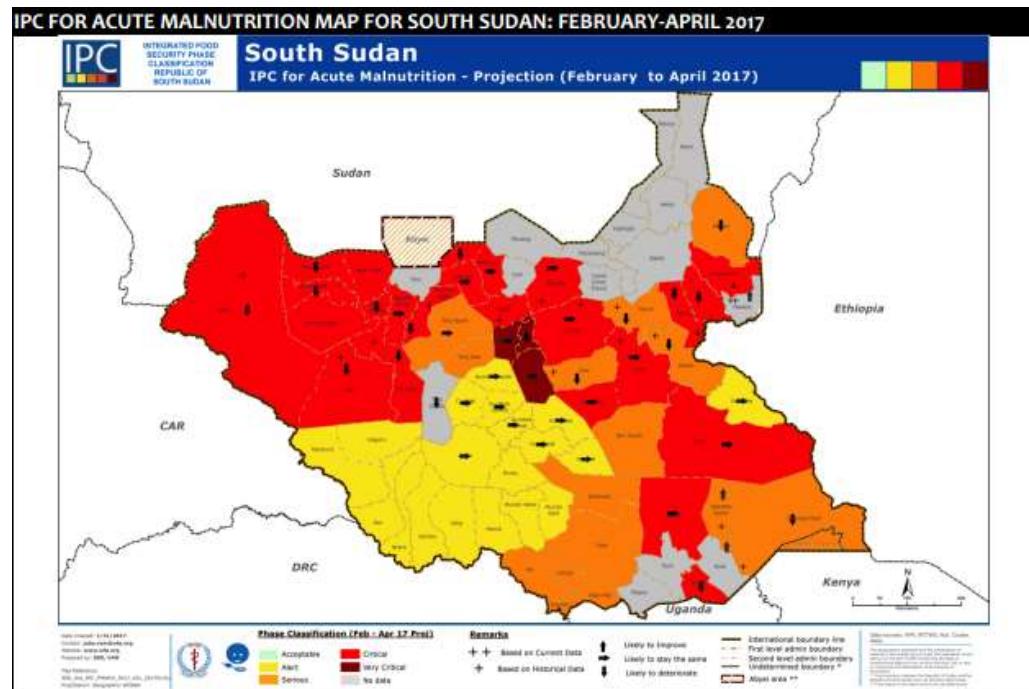
WASH infrastructure

Access to safe drinking water is severely limited, notably in Unity, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Central and Eastern Equatoria. 86% of the urban population lived without safe sanitation facilities in 2016, and open defecation in rural areas is common (Water Aid 18/11/2016). This weakens people's resistance to disease outbreaks.

Outlook

The lean season is from May to August, and the food and nutrition crises are expected to escalate during that period. The risk of famine will be greater, notably in Koch county in Unity and in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, where coping mechanisms are exhausted (FEWSNET 16/03/2017, UNICEF 15/02/2017). Wild food is also less available at the height of the lean season, which is likely to affect people's coping mechanisms (FEWSNET 16/03/2017). The economic situation shows no sign of improvement, with prices continuing to rise.

Nutrition forecast, February–April 2017



Source: IPC 20/02/2017

Contextual information

Conflict erupted in the ranks of the South Sudanese army, the SPLA, in December 2013, after President Salva Kiir accused Vice President Riek Machar of plotting a coup against

him in Juba. Troops split according to ethnic group, with Nuer – supporting Machar – fighting Dinka, loyal to Kiir (Small Arms Survey 2015). Fighting was concentrated primarily in the Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity states.

The SPLA and SPLA-in-Opposition signed a peace agreement in August 2015. In April 2016 Riek Machar resumed his role as Vice President and returned to Juba. A Transitional Government of National Unity was set up and 1,300 opposition came to the capital with the stated aim of creating a joint security force with government troops. However in July 2016 conflict erupted in the city. SPLA-IO forces were ultimately pushed out of the city, but conflict spread into the Equatoria, which have become the front line in the fighting, and reports of ethnically targeted attacks have grown.

Stakeholders

SPLA: The SPLA is estimated to number 210,000 soldiers (IISS 2013).

SPLA-IO: In late 2013, Riek Machar, Vice President and a senior SPLA commander belonging to the Nuer ethnic group, was accused by President Kiir of planning a coup, and removed from his position. This led to the formation of the SPLA-IO and civil war (Small Arms Survey 2015; IASR 2015).

Other armed groups: Many armed groups have splintered from the SPLA-IO, and never adhered to the August 2015 peace agreement (Small Arms Survey 2015).

United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) last renewed its mandate in August 2016 to last until 30 June 2017. In August last year the Security Council also authorised the expansion of the peacekeeping force to 17,000, up from 13,000 (UN 12/06/2016). UNMISS is in charge of PoC sites (UNSC 13/07/2016).

Neighbouring countries' relationship to the conflict

Uganda: Traditionally a supporter of the SPLA, Ugandan military convoys crossed into South Sudan on 14 July 2016 to evacuate its citizens from Juba following the outbreak of violence in the capital. Following this there were speculations that the convoy of around 50 trucks and 2,000 soldiers would remain in Juba to aid the SPLA (AFP 14/07/2016). The Ugandan government has since stated that it will not participate in any military intervention in South Sudan. Uganda is home to 816,000 South Sudanese refugees (UNHCR 20/03/2016; Reuters 02/02/2017).

Sudan: Historically, Sudan has supported South Sudan's armed groups in their opposition to the government. In more recent years relations between Khartoum and Juba have improved and at present Khartoum is not thought to be supporting armed groups in South Sudan and has refused requests to do so (ICG 23/01/2017) A number of Sudanese armed groups however, still operate within South Sudan.

Key characteristics

Demographic profile: 12 million people - two-thirds of the population are under 30 years old (World Bank 2015).

Food security: 4.4 million people are currently estimated food insecure (IPC 3 to 5) (IPC 20/02/2017).

Nutrition: SAM: 4%, GAM: 15.6%, both above WHO emergency thresholds (UNICEF 17/01/2017).

Health: Infant mortality: 105 per 1,000 live births; under-five mortality: 93 per 1,000 live births; maternal mortality: 2,054 per 100,000 live births (World Bank 20/10/2016).

WASH: 59% of the population has access to improved water resources (World Bank 2015). 7% of the population has access to improved sanitation facilities (World Bank 2015).

Literacy: 27% of the population aged 15 and above is literate: 40% for males and 16% for females (World Bank 20/10/2016).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

Local NGOs operate in-country, however there is no significant national response.

International response capacity

Many international organisations and NGOs are present in South Sudan. Despite difficulties accessing the areas most affected by food insecurity, the declaration of famine in Unity state at the end of February encouraged many national and international NGOs to resume operations in these areas. Food distributions were carried out in January and February. However, the South Sudanese government increased fees for work permits and asked organisations operating in Unity to leave the area ahead of a

military operation at the beginning of March, further restricting their ability to respond to people's needs.

Population coping mechanisms

Most coping strategies have been exhausted in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Unity. Those still being used include food reduction, collection of firewood and wild food to sell on markets, borrowing or begging for food, offering labour on other people's lands, or selling cattle (Concern 12/10/2016).

People rely on wild foods to survive. This is notably the case in Central Equatoria and in Unity, where people displaced on islands survive on wild foods and water lilies (Reuters 26/02/2017). Consumption of water lilies increased in the months up to February 2017. This is problematic because uprooting plants will likely prevent them from growing in future seasons, and will affect food availability in the medium to long term (FEWSNET 16/03/2017).

Information gaps and needs

- Limited access to areas recently affected by the conflict, such as parts of Upper Nile, Jonglei and Central Equatoria, makes it difficult to estimate the number of people in need of food and nutrition, and the severity of their needs.
- Lack of information on the situation of IDPs not in PoC sites.
- Lack of data on nutrition.