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# Impact Evaluation for Resilience Learning in South Sudan

Inception report



August 2022

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# 1. Introduction

1. In 2020, 155 million people worldwide faced “crisis or worse” levels of food insecurity. Almost 115 million of them lived in countries affected by conflict or weather extremes.<sup>1</sup> Extended food crises were predicted in 2021, which would necessitate continued large-scale humanitarian assistance. In South Sudan, 7.4 million people faced acute food insecurity in April-July 2021.<sup>2</sup> Climate shocks such as floods,<sup>3</sup> as well as continuing conflicts, are identified to have significantly affected food security, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated the crisis.
2. Close to 70 percent of the population of South Sudan (8.3 million people) need some form of humanitarian assistance. Of these, close to 108,000 people face “catastrophic” levels of food insecurity – the highest level in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification System (IPC).<sup>4</sup> Approximately 1.4 million children were expected to experience acute malnutrition in 2021,<sup>5</sup> and more than 2 million children were out of school. To respond to these development challenges, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and partners with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) have created a multi-year Joint Programme to strengthen resilience in urban and peri-urban communities in South Sudan. Through a four-year commitment, the programme is intended to enhance resilience to shocks by meeting immediate food and nutrition needs, strengthening livelihoods, and improving access to basic services such as education and health care. However, there is a lack of evidence on how development outcomes are affected by these shocks, and how UNICEF’s and WFP’s programmes support populations to effectively respond to these shocks.
3. The World Food Programme’s (WFP) Office of Evaluation (OEV), Asset Creation and Livelihood Unit, and Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Unit partnered with the World Bank’s Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) department to create the Climate and Resilience Impact Evaluation (IE) Window. WFP’s Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019–2026) focuses on delivering impact evaluations that contribute to global evidence as well as organizational learning. Impact evaluation windows help to achieve this strategy by focusing portfolios of impact evaluations on priority evidence needs, identified through literature reviews and extensive consultations.
4. The Climate and Resilience Window was designed to help with understanding of how WFP’s programmes contribute to the resilience of the populations supported. The first round of impact evaluations selected for this window were designed to estimate the effects of integrated packages of resilience activities on households’ capacity to absorb shocks (absorptive capacity), adapt to increasing environmental or economic stressors (adaptive capacity), and improve well-being in the long term (transformative capacity).
5. The impact evaluation for South Sudan is intended to estimate the impacts of the UNICEF-WFP joint resilience programme on absorptive, adaptive, and transformative resilience capacities. The joint resilience programme in South Sudan comprises a range of activities, including health and nutrition interventions, education programming, and Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) activities. The intended direct outcomes of the intervention are increased household resilience capacities, food security, nutrition, health, and education.
6. This Inception Report outlines the planned strategy for assessing the impact of the UNICEF-WFP resilience programme in South Sudan on the dynamics of population well-being and resilience. Through this impact evaluation, UNICEF, WFP, and DIME are working together to complement other ongoing efforts and to guide future investments and activities related to resilience in South Sudan.

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<sup>1</sup> WFP. 2021. Global Report on Food Crises: Joint analysis for better decisions

<sup>2</sup> WFP. 2021, WFP South Sudan Situation Report #294

<sup>3</sup> WFP. 2021 WFP South Sudan Country Brief, July 2021, In 2021 alone, more than 115,000 people have been affected by flooding in South Sudan.

<sup>4</sup> WFP. 2021 WFP South Sudan Country Brief, July 2021

<sup>5</sup> [UNICEF South Sudan. 2021. All together to prevent child malnutrition](#)

7. This Inception Report also builds on a [pre-analysis plan \(PAP\)](#) that was registered with the American Economic Association's registry for randomized controlled trials. The pre-analysis plan includes detailed information on primary outcomes, research design - which includes details of randomized controlled trials and heterogeneity analysis, the randomization method, the randomization unit, clustering, sample size (total number, number of clusters, and units per treatment arm), and the regression specifications. The purpose of the PAP is to outline the set of hypotheses and analyses that will be performed on the data before it is collected.

## 2. Evaluation context

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

8. South Sudan became an independent country in 2011 following decades of war and conflicts. Independence was followed by a return to widespread armed conflict and insecurity, which has resulted in poor economic growth, displacement, and worrying development trends.
9. In 2021 alone, nearly 70 percent of the population required some form of humanitarian assistance with more than 100,000 people facing “catastrophic” (IPC Phase 5) levels of food insecurity.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, UNICEF estimated that 313,000 South Sudanese children under five years of age would be affected by severe acute malnutrition.<sup>7</sup> Nearly one in ten children die before the age of five due to health-related complications, and only 44 percent have received the necessary immunization.<sup>8</sup>
10. In 2017, famine was declared in two counties of the country's Unity State. South Sudan's population is highly exposed to climatic shocks, such as floods and drought. Food production has declined since the start of the conflict in 2014, hitting its lowest level in 2017: it has since increased slightly (but adjustment to population growth reveals a consistent reduction in production per capita). In most parts of South Sudan, households have the potential to produce surplus agricultural commodities but have challenges due to weak physical access to inputs and markets, high prices for agriculture inputs, inadequate structures to mitigate climatic shocks, and poor payment terms. In many cases insecurity has prevented farmers from accessing lands during planting and harvesting. The conflict has further constrained the private sector market and, with fewer traders in the market, farmers' terms of trade have further eroded. Floods also washed away much of the crop in 2019 and 2020.
11. The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to unique challenges to nutrition service delivery, as access to sites for treatment was limited because of the risk of COVID-19 infections, and the anthropometric measurement (weight and height) used to diagnose child malnutrition was suspended. The pandemic required the suspension of preventive activities such as the Vitamin A supplementation campaign and mass mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening, which have since been initiated again.
12. South Sudan has received substantial humanitarian assistance over the years. In 2020 alone, the South Sudan humanitarian response totalled US\$1.2 billion.<sup>9</sup> A range of interventions has been implemented in response to shocks and seasonal food insecurity, including cash or food transfers during the lean agricultural season, and other forms of health and nutrition support. The collaboration between UNICEF and WFP in South Sudan brings together UNICEF's expertise in the education; child protection; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); health; and nutrition sectors; along with WFP's expertise in addressing acute and persevering food security and nutrition needs, as well as its logistical reach and expertise in building community assets and livelihoods.

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<sup>6</sup> WFP. 2021. WFP South Sudan Country Brief, July 2021

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF. 2021. Combating malnutrition in South Sudan, one child at a time

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF. 2021. Health in South Sudan: Briefing note

<sup>9</sup> OCHA. 2021. 2020 South Sudan Humanitarian Response in Review

13. Consistent with these broader efforts at national level, a key focus of WFP's Interim Country Strategic Plan in South Sudan (2018-2020 and extended to 2022)<sup>10</sup> is to implement integrated resilience activities to protect livelihoods and foster sustainable development in the long term. WFP has established a resilience programme that layers a set of integrated interventions on Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) interventions. The main objective of WFP's resilience programme is to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of smallholder farmers and vulnerable populations. The programme is intended to build the resilience of food systems and livelihood of targeted communities, while also strengthening community structures to support social cohesion and thus contribute to conflict prevention and prospects for peace. WFP has been working in Sudan since 1963 and upgraded its regional office in Juba to a Country Office after South Sudan's independence in 2011. WFP is actively involved in the food security sector and has presence throughout the country with 15 field offices located in all ten states and with hard-to-reach areas covered by the Rapid Response Missions – the widest footprint of any humanitarian agency in South Sudan. With the goals of saving lives, reducing food insecurity, stabilizing malnutrition rates, and helping to restore and enhance the livelihoods of vulnerable and shock-affected populations, WFP has projects throughout the country, with an expert logistics team as well as an early warning and food security monitoring network. WFP's food assistance activities support the objectives and expected outputs of the Food Security and Livelihood Cluster (FSLC), Nutrition Cluster, Education Cluster, and multi-sector refugee response. WFP co-leads the FSLC with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and actively supports cluster leads in the nutrition and education clusters.
14. UNICEF's Country Programme document (2019 – 2021 and extended to 2022) sets out its vision for “enhanced and more equitable outcomes achieved for the children of South Sudan.”<sup>11</sup> To this end, UNICEF has been at the forefront since South Sudan's independence in 2011 (and as part of Sudan since 1989) in providing a multisector response – including the education, health, nutrition, child protection, and WASH sectors – to the multiple humanitarian crises in South Sudan. UNICEF's 13 field offices located in the ten states enable wide coverage and quality programming. UNICEF is working towards building a protective environment in which children's rights are respected and, to the extent possible, opportunities are created for children to develop their potential. In stable areas, UNICEF works with partners to implement programmes for longer-term recovery and resilience among affected communities. UNICEF works to strengthen cross-sectoral, integrated responses at the national and subnational levels, while seeking local solutions and community engagement using innovative approaches to access communities requiring humanitarian responses. Efforts will be undertaken to ensure that the sectors mainstream protection and that the “do no harm” principle is fully respected. UNICEF's activities support the objectives and expected outputs of the Nutrition Cluster, Education Cluster, WASH Cluster, Health Cluster, and Child Protection Sub-Cluster. UNICEF co-leads the nutrition, education, and WASH clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility.
15. Given this context and policy environment, UNICEF, WFP, and DIME, with support from BMZ, are collaborating to build evidence on how multiple interventions can be combined or sequenced to boost the resilience of poor and vulnerable households in South Sudan. This evidence agenda is being implemented as part of the UNICEF-WFP joint resilience programme in South Sudan.

## PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

16. The UNICEF's current Country Programme Document (2019-2021)<sup>12</sup> and WFP's South Sudan Interim Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022, intend to directly contribute to the goals outlined in South Sudan's National Development Strategy and the United Nations Cooperation Framework (2019-2021) in South Sudan. UNICEF and WFP's Programme of Cooperation in South Sudan contributes to the four agreed outcome areas of the Cooperation Framework: building peace and good governance; strengthening food security and recovering livelihoods; strengthening social services; and empowering women and young people.

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<sup>10</sup> WFP. 2017. South Sudan Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022)

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF. 2018. South Sudan Country Programme Document (2019-2022), extended to 2022 [\[Link\]](#)

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF has submitted the next South Sudan Country Programme Document to the executive board for the September 2022 session [\[Link\]](#)

17. The UNICEF-WFP Joint Programme is aligned with the objectives set out in the Programme of Cooperation and includes a range of interventions that support communities to absorb shocks, adapt to risks, and transform livelihoods to move out of poverty. It includes a package of interventions that fall under three broad categories: i) livelihood activities – including Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) or Food Assistance for Training activities; (ii) access to education – including child protection, school feeding, and other school-based support mechanisms; and (iii) health and nutrition – including water, sanitation, and health (WASH) activities and nutrition interventions. The livelihood interventions are intended to catalyse growth, while the schooling and health facilities ensure access to basic services. The planning of these interventions is supported through the community-based participatory planning (CBPP) process.
18. The programme commitment covers four years (2020-2023) and focuses on urban and peri-urban communities in South Sudan. The specific geographic areas supported through the programme was identified based on the work of the broader Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) initiative in South Sudan, launched in 2018. Initial PfRR efforts are focused on seven geographic areas in South Sudan that represent the diversity of ethnicities, livelihoods, political groups, and institutions found in and characterizing South Sudan: Yambio, Torit, Aweil, Wau, Rumbek, Bor and Yei. The partnership comprises peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development partners committed to working together to reduce vulnerability and build the resilience of citizens, communities, and institutions. The PfRR recognizes that some locations in South Sudan are conducive to resilience-focused programming. The UNICEF-WFP Joint Programme focuses on a subset of the “Candidate Partnership Areas” identified by the PfRR. Within the programme areas, the impact evaluation will focus on communities supported through the programme in Juba, Torit, Yambio, and Aweil counties.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 1: Counties covered by the impact evaluation**



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