

HIGHLIGHTS

- Three national aid workers killed and partners suspend operations due to renewed fighting in Unity.
- Seven aid workers released in Lainya County, while ten others are missing outside Yei town in Central Equatoria.
- More than 200 children released by armed groups in South Sudan.
- Over 70 per cent of the civilians returning from displacement find their homes partially or severely destroyed, according to a new study.
- Humanitarian partners are responding to needs in Raja County, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, where an estimated 74,000 people are facing severe food insecurity.



A 13-year-old boy stands during a ceremony to release children from the ranks of armed groups in Yambio. Photo: UNICEF. See story on page 2.

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Aid worker deaths amid insecurity and increasing needs

Three aid workers killed in renewed conflict in Unity

Three national aid workers were killed in April, following renewed fighting in multiple locations of Unity. The aid workers were killed in separate incidents in Rubkona, Mayendit and Leer counties. On 7 April, armed men shot at an NGO vehicle, clearly marked with the Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (CORDAID) logos, while transporting five aid workers along Nhialdiu-Bentiu road. One national staff working for Hope Restoration, a national NGO was killed in the attack. A day later, a health worker was shot dead while fleeing inter-communal clashes near a national NGO health facility, in Lual village, Mayendit County. Later in the month, a third aid worker was shot and killed while returning to check on a health clinic that had been looted in Leer County.

The Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, Alain Noudehou, strongly condemned the attacks.

“Aid workers risk their lives every day to provide life-saving assistance to people in need in South Sudan. I strongly condemn the targeting of aid workers and demand that those responsible for these acts be brought to justice,” said Mr. Noudehou. “Our deepest condolences go to the families of the victims and the affected organisations,” he added.

At least 100 aid workers have been killed since the start of the conflict in December 2013; the majority being South Sudanese nationals.

Partners suspend operations as insecurity intensifies

Armed clashes between government and opposition forces erupted from 14 to 18 April in Jazeera, Ding-Ding, (Rubkona County), Koch town (Koch County) and Nimni (Guit County), forcing a number of aid workers to suspend their operations.

A team of aid workers that was drilling boreholes in Ding-Ding was forced to suspend their activities due to insecurity. Fighting in Koch town saw the relocation of nine aid workers from two aid agencies. Hundreds of civilians were reportedly displaced.

On 18 April, a national NGO staff was shot and injured in crossfire in Nimni, while hundreds of civilians fled their homes for safety. Clashes were also reported in Koch

FIGURES

No. of Internally Displaced People	1.76 million
No. of refugees in neighboring countries	2.45 million
No. of people assisted in 2018 (as of 31 Mar)	2.2 million

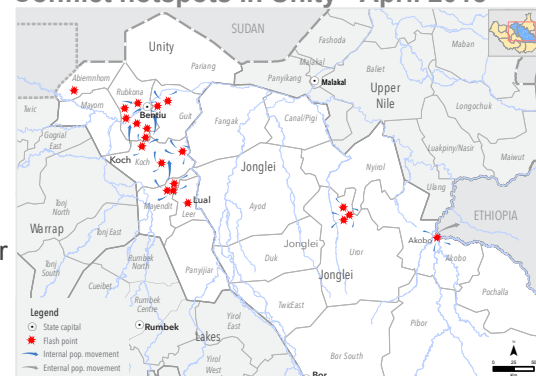
FUNDING

\$358.6 million
funding received in 2018

20.9%
of appeal funding received in 2018

\$1.7 billion
requirements for South Sudan 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan

Conflict hotspots in Unity - April 2018



Map: OCHA

town, Koch County, Dablual, Rubkuai and Thaker in Mayendit County, from 18 to 25 April, forcing the relocation of 44 aid workers from multiple agencies back to Bentiu town, Juba and Rumbek. Health, education, nutrition and water, sanitation and health (WASH) activities benefiting thousands of people were disrupted. An unknown number of houses have been burnt to the ground, creating enormous challenges for return and reintegration.

Aid workers released after three weeks in detention

Seven national staff members from South Sudan Health Association' (SSUHA) - a national NGO, were released on 15 March after being detained by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLA-iO) forces for 20 days. The aid workers were taken captive on 25 March while on mission from Kupera County to Lainya County, to deliver supplies to health centres serving thousands of people in need in Koyoki, Kupera, Limuro and Wuji areas. The aid workers were in good health when they were handed over to a humanitarian partner. Three agency vehicles that had been confiscated and temporarily used by the authorities were returned to the organisation.

The Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Alain Noudehou, called for the immediate and unconditional release of the aid workers and strongly urged all parties to the conflict in South Sudan to ensure that the operating environment is conducive to the delivery of aid. He asserted that free, safe and unhindered access is essential to reach the millions of South Sudanese people in need.

This is a reminder of the dangers that humanitarian workers face in delivering assistance every day. Aid worker security in Africa's youngest nation remains a key concern, with humanitarians constantly being harassed, intimidated, beaten and killed.

Ten aid workers missing near Yei

Ten aid workers have gone missing near Yei town, the capital of Yei River State, in Central Equatorial region. Their convoy was headed to Tore Payam from Yei town on 25 April to conduct a humanitarian needs assessment. Their whereabouts and well-being remained unknown as of 29 April.

In a statement issued on 26 April, Mr. Noudehou demanded their immediate release without preconditions.

"We are deeply concerned about the whereabouts of these humanitarian workers and are urgently seeking information about their well-being, said Mr Noudehou. "These individuals, UN and NGO staff are here to help the people of South Sudan and should not be targeted. Our colleagues must be released without condition so that their work can continue."

The missing national staff include one from UNOCHA, two from UNICEF, two from the Association of Christian Resources Serving Sudan, one from Action Africa Help, three from Plan International and one from South Sudanese Development Organization.

"I firmly condemn the latest attack against colleagues engaged in emergency humanitarian assistance in Central Equatoria and call on all parties to the conflict in South Sudan to ensure a safe and secure environment, conducive to the delivery of assistance," said Mr. Noudehou.

This is the second incident involving an attack on aid workers by armed groups in April alone and the third in the last six months in South Sudan.

More than 200 children released by armed groups require sustainable support

Some 207 children were released by armed groups in South Sudan on 17 April at a ceremony in Bakiwiri, near the city of Yambio, Western Equatoria State. This was the second large release of children by armed groups in 2018, in a process that targets the release of some 1,000 children from the ranks of armed groups.

In early February, more than 300 children were released in Yambio town to either their

The seven aid workers were taken while delivering supplies to health centres serving thousands of people in need.

The aid workers went missing on 25 April while enroute to Tore Payam, outside Yei town to conduct a humanitarian needs assessment.

“Reintegration is the most difficult part of the release process. Putting down weapons is the first journey in the recovery process but leading normal lives is even more difficult for the children,” said Mdoe, South Sudan UNICEF Representative.

families or UNICEF-supported care centres.

“No child should ever have to pick up a weapon and fight” said Mahimbo Mdoe, UNICEF’s Representative in South Sudan. “For every child released, today marks the start of a new life. UNICEF is proud to support these children as they return to their families and start to build a brighter future.”

During the ceremony, the children were formally disarmed and provided with civilian clothes. The children will undergo medical screening, receive counselling and psychosocial support. Their families will be provided with three months’ worth of food assistance and the children will receive vocational training aimed at improving household income and food security. Being unable to support themselves economically can be a key factor in children becoming associated with armed groups.

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Read more: *UNICEF Press release* -- <https://uni.cf/2JdGSK6>

Reports identify drivers and effects of displacement

Majority of the returnees find homes destroyed, risking further displacement

Over 70 per cent of the civilians returning from displacement are finding their homes partially or severely damaged in 23 counties, assessed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) between January and February 2018. A pilot mobility tracking exercise conducted in parts of eastern and central Equatoria, Lakes, Upper Nile, and western and northern Bahr el Ghazal, identified 575,340 IDPs and 230,972 returnees. This reveals a rise in return movements with a corresponding decrease in new displacements in the assessed areas .

Housing damage was particularly severe in Central Equatoria (31 per cent severely damaged with people living in makeshift shelters and 56 per cent partially damaged) and in Northern Bahr el Ghazal (24 per cent severely damaged and 60 per cent partially damaged). Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria reported less severely damaged housing (8 per cent each), but still feature significant portions of partially damaged housing.

More than 475,000 individuals from the assessed areas are displaced; 93 per cent of whom are reportedly abroad. The pilot study found that displacement triggers in these areas were largely linked to conflict, including food insecurity triggered by conflict.

Read more: IOM DTM report -- <https://bit.ly/2EZG3Sp>

Displacement driving South Sudan’s food crisis

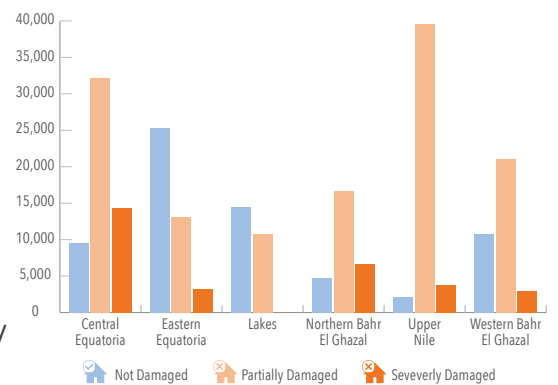
A study published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) in March, indicates that conflict-induced displacement was worsening the country’s already dire food security situation. A large number of farmers in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Central Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal have either been displaced, while those left behind are unable to cultivate far-fields and are limited to homestead areas, due to insecurity.

The protracted conflict has disrupted livelihood activities and has reduced the average area of land planted per household. A notable reduction of 47 per cent and 11 per cent

Over 475,000 individuals remain displaced from the assessed areas and 93 per cent of those are currently reported to be located abroad.

The protracted conflict has disrupted livelihood activities and has reduced the average area of land planted per household.

Status of returnee housing



in the average harvested area was recorded for the key-producing areas of Central and Western Equatoria states, respectively; and 28 per cent contraction in Western Bahr el Ghazal State. Only 61 per cent of the 2018 national cereal needs are met by the harvest.

By contrast, FAO reports that production is expected to increase in Upper Nile (18 per cent) and Unity (9 per cent) states, following the return of some previously displaced households. Jonglei and Lakes State may also experience moderate increases of 6 per cent, although the output still remains below the pre-conflict levels.

Food security is expected to deteriorate through at least July 2018, as widespread insecurity continues to displace communities. Nearly 4.3 million people – one in three South Sudanese – have been displaced, including more than 1.76 million who are internally displaced and about 2.5 million in neighbouring countries.



IDPs in Makak swamp. Photo: Nile Hope

[Read more:](https://bit.ly/2qMvJrR) FAO/WFP crop assessment report -- <https://bit.ly/2qMvJrR>

Partners respond to food crisis in Raja

Humanitarian agencies responded to over 17,000 people in Raja County in Western Bahr el-Ghazal, where an estimated 74,000 people are facing severe food insecurity, according to the latest Integrated Phase Classification (IPC). The food shortages have triggered population displacement from the area to Nagero County in Western Equatoria and Wau town.

As of 28 March, more than 845 internally displaced persons (IDPs) mainly women, children and the elderly from Diem Zuber payam and Raja town had arrived in Namutina area, Nagero County in Western Equatoria. Partners report that many of the new arrivals have walked for days with their belongings, and were hungry and frail. The IDPs cite insecurity, lack of food and limited access to basic services as reasons for the displacement. Partners expect many more people to be displaced if the security situation does not improve.

Additionally, humanitarian partners reported that some 800 new IDPs from Raja and Diem Zuber were received at the Wau Protection of Civilians (PoC) site and Lokoloko camp in Wau town, between 25 March and 23 April. The main reasons cited for the movement is lack of food, poor living conditions and growing insecurity.

Between 15 and 24 March, through a joint Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) effort, partners delivered an integrated package of life-saving humanitarian relief to Raja and surrounding areas. This included general food rations, preventive blanket supplementary feeding and curative nutrition services. Children were vaccinated and supported to access education and critical child protection services.

Humanitarian partners assisted some 8,400 vulnerable people in Raja town, 6,000 in Deim Zubier and 3,100 in Ndollo areas outside Raja town, with one-month food rations.

An estimated 74,000 people Raja County, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, are facing severe food insecurity, according to the latest Integrated Phase Classification (IPC).

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OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at: www.reliefweb.int