

Over the last several weeks, FEWS NET participated in a multi-agency IPC process to classify the food security situation. FEWS NET supports the [preliminary conclusions](#) reached on the size and scope of current needs in South Sudan, which far exceed a normal year. More detailed results from the IPC process will be available later this month.

Without urgent action, populations in localized areas could face Famine

Due to the impacts of continued conflict in South Sudan, more than three million people are currently in need of urgent humanitarian response to address food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or higher). Large portions of the population in conflict-affected areas face Emergency (IPC Phase 4), meaning that they are unable to meet basic survival needs even with extreme coping, such as selling all of their livestock. Further deterioration in food security is likely, along with an increase in the size of the food-insecure population, given ongoing displacement, expectations for a poor 2014/2015 cropping season, and significantly reduced income in the context of high staple food prices and widespread market disruption. **Without urgent action, this deterioration, in combination with high background levels of malnutrition and mortality, suggests that Famine (IPC Phase 5) is possible in localized (sub-county) areas of Jonglei and Unity States during the coming four months. This deterioration coincides with the area's lean season, when food insecurity is already at its peak.** The limited amount of information makes it difficult to pinpoint the specific location of the worst affected populations. However, the counties of greatest concern are Mayendit, Koch, Panyijar, and Leer Counties in Unity State and Ayod, Duk, Uror, and Nyirol counties in Jonglei State. The worst-off areas of Upper Nile State are Baliet and Panyikang.

Conflict between the Government of South Sudan and opposition forces began in mid-December 2013. It has disrupted harvests in the eastern part of the country, destroyed market infrastructure and food stocks, and displaced over one million people. Ongoing conflict in Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity States has limited access to important seasonal income sources, including agricultural labor, collection and sale of firewood, and livestock rearing. It has also constrained humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas, where high concentrations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have strained the resources of host communities. These new shocks have occurred against a backdrop of severe chronic food insecurity and persistently high levels of acute malnutrition and child mortality. According to UNICEF, the prevalence of acute malnutrition among children in South Sudan is the highest of any country in the world.

The following assumptions underlie FEWS NET analysis of the deteriorating conditions:

1. **Conflict between the Government of South Sudan and opposition forces likely to continue, despite the rains.** Movement on a peace agreement has occurred and the potential for a decrease in hostility exists. If realized, this will be taken into consideration in future analyses.
2. **A sharp reduction in agricultural labor opportunities and reduced green harvests in August and September are expected.** Continued conflict and displacement is expected to prevent significant numbers of people from preparing and planting their land, an activity that typically begins in March/April. The reduction in area planted is expected to be largest in Unity and central Jonglei. A forecast for average to below-average rains during the second half of the season in the eastern part of the country related to El Niño, lack of access to seeds, and atypical consumption of seeds will further reduce production. Green harvests typically serve as an important source of food in the months leading up to the main harvest in October.
3. **Average flooding during the wet season.** Historical stream flow data from South Sudan indicates that peak flow occurs during the June-September rainy season. Forecasts suggest average to below-average rainfall during this period. However, even normal flooding can be quite widespread during the rainy season, particularly in Unity State.
4. **Households will have reduced access to key food and income sources.** Income from firewood sales, grass sales, and domestic work, all key income sources for poor households, are expected to decline due to insecurity and reduced demand. Formal government wages, a key component of the region's economy, have also been suspended in

opposition-controlled areas. Access to fishing is generally normal, though the ability to expand this source of food has limits. Access to wild foods is limited by insecurity, and some wild foods are less available during the wet season.

5. **Trade flows and market functioning will remain disrupted within Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile.** Many cereal markets in in Unity, north/central Jonglei, and southern Upper Nile are not functioning due to the conflict's impacts on trade flows. Markets in areas adjacent to conflict-affected areas are functioning but supplies are more limited than usual and prices are high. In addition, markets in these areas are typically cut off during the rainy season. Imports from Ethiopia and Sudan have been limited by conflict, movement restrictions (e.g., checkpoints), and the presence of fewer traders. In addition, prices for commodities from Sudan are much higher than usual due to a poor 2013 harvest and macroeconomic issues there. These conditions are expected to continue.
6. **Prices are likely to remain high and volatile in conflict-affected areas of Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile.** While price information from conflict-affected areas is limited, available data suggests that where markets are still functioning, supplies are limited. Food prices are much higher than pre-crisis levels. Disruptions described above suggest that market availability will decline and prices will increase further over the coming months. Typically, households are almost entirely dependent on markets for staple food from May to August.
7. **The prevalence of acute malnutrition is assumed to be very high (15-30%) and is expected to rise further.** Representative survey data is limited, but a review of historical data and recent assessments suggest that the prevalence of acute malnutrition is at critical levels (15-30%) in many parts of Jonglei and Upper Nile, above the World Health Organization's 15 percent emergency threshold. Available data suggests that acute malnutrition in Unity is at crisis levels (10-15%). The prevalence of acute malnutrition is expected to rise further in the coming months due to the typical seasonal increase that occurs during the March-June pre-harvest season, the likely deterioration in access to health care and therapeutic/supplementary feeding programs due to displacement and damage to health centers, recent increases in acute respiratory infections and malaria cases, and the expected deterioration in food security.
8. **Delivery of food assistance to conflict-affected populations remains limited from May to August.** The 2014 South Sudan Crisis Response Plan targets 1.6 million people for food assistance. This is substantially below current estimates indicating that four million people will be in need of urgent response during the lean season. Second, despite recent pledges, significant funding gaps exist. As of May 6, WFP's Emergency Operations (EMOP) were only 34 percent funded. Finally, a range of factors are constraining the delivery of assistance. These include access restrictions that prevent humanitarian agencies from reaching affected populations, the impacts of the rains on road deliveries of food aid, and a lack of aircraft to allow for large scale air drops.

Based on these assumptions, up to four million people will require urgent assistance to address food insecurity (IPC phase 3 and higher) by the peak of the lean season (June-August). More than one million people will face Emergency (IPC Phase 4) in conflict-affected areas of the country. Between June and August, without urgent action, Famine (IPC Phase 5) is possible in localized (sub-county) areas Jonglei and Unity states. Famine (IPC Phase 5) is defined by the IPC as occurring when at least 20 percent of households face extreme food consumption gaps with little ability to cope, the prevalence of acute malnutrition in children under 5 is higher than 30 percent, and the Crude Death Rate exceeds 2/10,000 people/day. Areas of particular concern include Mayendit, Koch, Panyijar, and Leer counties in Unity State and Ayod, Duk, Uror, and Nyirol counties in Jonglei State. The worst off areas of Upper Nile State are Baliet and Panyikang. Populations of most concern are IDPs especially those not yet located and assessed, though host communities are also facing above-average levels of food insecurity.

In August/September, some improvement in food security is possible as green harvests become available. These improvements would only benefit households who are able to plant. Further, these improvements are expected to be short lived as the overall harvest is likely to be below-average. Key determinants of the harvest include: the timing and location of future harvests, the success of seed distribution efforts, the severity of expected end of season dryness, and the quantity of production that households consume as green harvests. If the harvest is very poor and conflict continues, food security in 2015 may be as bad or worse than 2014.

Additional funding for food assistance programs is urgently needed, along with support for complementary sectoral interventions. All parties must provide safe passage to humanitarian actors. Humanitarian agencies should reconsider the size of the population currently targeted by emergency operations and take additional, well-coordinated steps to negotiate access to the worst-affected populations. Finally, significant investments in information collection are needed to improve the quality of food security analysis and projections.